

*Horror in Culture & Entertainment*

# RUE MORQUE

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IS ONE BRUTAL BEAST**

INTERVIEWS WITH THE CAST AND CREW

**#136** AUGUST 2013 CAN \$5.95



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ON HIS KAIJU EPIC  
+ IRISH SEA MONSTER MOVIE GRABBERS**

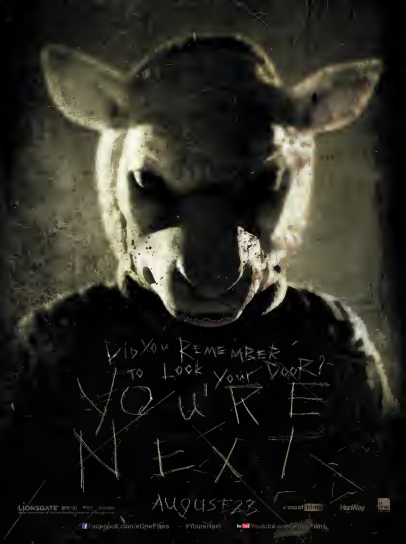
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*-Rob Stanger, The Movie Voice*

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- Cast & Crew Commentary  
- 3 featurettes (Hatchet III: Behind The Scenes, Raising Kane, Swamp Fun)  
- Trailer - Teaser

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# SUMMER NIGHTS BEDTIME FRIGHTS

## > BROADCAST PREMIERES

The Loved Ones > August 2, 10PM ET/7 p

The Rite > August 4, 10PM ET/7 p

Detention > August 25, 8PM ET/5 p



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## > AFTER DARK HORRORFEST August 8, 4PM ET/1 p

- > Dread
- > Wicked Little Things
- > Penny Dreadful
- > The Hamiltons
- > The Reeds
- > Lake Mungo



## > LITERALLY GOTHIC August 22, 8PM ET/5 p

- > Mary Reilly
- > Gothic
- > Mary Shelley's Frankenstein



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## 16 BEASTS AT THE DOOR

Nearly two years after its world premiere, it up the midnight schedules at the Toronto International Film Festival, *It's a Bitch* brings its home invasion horror to theatres. **PLUS:** We untangle the intersecting nooses of the *It's a Bitch* gang, and *It's a Bitch* misadvent.

by **DAVE ALEXANDER**, **TREVOR TURNER**, **SCOTT FENHILL** and **SAM COSTELLO**

## 24 WORLDWIDE MONSTER WAR

Guillermo del Toro pits mechs against kaiju creatures in *Pacific Rim*, his biggest film yet. **PLUS:** A look at Irish sea-monster comedy *Grabbers*, in which the only way to avoid being teased, is to get wasted.

by **MICHAEL DOYLE** and **PHIL BROWN**

## 30 WAR MACHINES

After his stalled Nazi zombies project *World War Z*, George Clooney returns with new WWII horrors in *Foolish Wives*.

**PLUS:** The *Frankenstein* Trilogy reviewed by **PETER BUTTERFIELD** and **DAVE ALEXANDER**.

## 34 CONSPIRACY RESURRECTION

in *Travis* the 20th anniversary of the TV series' premiere, *The X-Files* gets a tenth season - in comic books.

by **MICHAEL S. KIEBLER**

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Where stars and merlot beds.

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reviewer *The Last of Us* and *Sister of George*

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reviewer Odette's "Tubular Bells"



# POST MORTEM

COMMENTS • QUESTIONS • CRITICISM



**LOOKING FORWARD** To being part of the non-fiction writing panel at @RueMorgue's 10th annual Festival of Fear this August.

**QUINDEADTY VIA TWITTER (A.K.A. DRAB MIDDLETON)**

**JOHN SOWEN HAS DONE** a great service by introducing one of my favorite rubber monster movies... *Diabolus* (RMF735). I've watched my bootleg copy a hundred times and when it finally got a DVD release I grabbed a copy fast. While it may be obscure, it deserves to be recognized as one of the great entries in the genre. It easily rivals many of its black and white chum-in-theater predecessors. Seek it out if rubber suits are your monster fetish!

**ROB LANSLEY VIA FACEBOOK**

**AFTER READING** the RMF125 cover story I can't wait to see @RueMorgue's *The Last Will and Testament of Vladimir Lugh* again. Real horror takes time.

**@SIDAMONGTHEPURE VIA TWITTER**

**THANK YOU** for giving Patrick Doherty his own column! For the past year, *Blood* on a Budget has been my favorite part of your website, and I'm thrilled to now see it in the magazine, where it belongs. I also really enjoyed the Night Gallery piece on my hometown pal Bruce White of *White Gook* fame. He's a master of the black (and) white art!

**JORDY DICKENS VIA FACEBOOK**

**PRO: I READ** @RueMorgue's mid-@America editorial coverage in its June issue (RMF734). Did I Google+ subscribed posts.

**@THECHREMAIDME VIA TWITTER**

**I JUST SAW YOUR FINE DEAD** issue - thought it was a good recipe. I wish your magazine wasn't so full of books, comics, video games and so much death and heavy metal music and soundtracks. The guys are at your best with articles and covers like *Abso-Whit a Shoggoth*, *Colin Jac*, new British horror, *Street Nuts* or the late Jess Franco. I agree with some of your reviews on films, Rob Zombie movies are overdone and just bloody rehashes. What I don't like are weak films like *Packhead*, *Abolition*, *Black Death* or phony, pretentious crap like *Pontypool* or *The Wicker Tree* - give me a break! But I do like when you cover John Carpenter's *Prince of Darkness*, *Assault on Precinct 13* or in the *Mouth of Madness*. I'd like to see more wayout films and directors covered in your magazine - people like David Lynch, Alexandre Jodorowski, Jess Franco, Mario Bava, Dario Argento, Alex Proyas, Stuart Gordon, Larry Cohen, Abel Ferrara and George Romero. Fuck the mainstream, get to work in the dark areas that you guys are so good

at. Believe me, you will attract more readers and better press. You're at your best when you, Rue Morgue, explore the dark and stay away from the light.

**DANIEL GARCIA - GILROY, CALIFORNIA**

[Thanks for the feedback, Daniel! We have published readers on most of the *Reviews* you suggest for additional coverage. You can browse the back issue section at [rue-morgue.com](http://rue-morgue.com) to find them - Ed.]

**I'VE ALWAYS BEEN** a big fan of video games - horror, RPG, adventure, etc. Is there any chance you may expand your coverage on them with more pages? I would appreciate it!

**ANDREW ROOTZ VIA FACEBOOK**

**I DO LOVE RUE MORGUE** No one else covers the ground that you do. No one else will put *The Great God Pan* on a cover or give such splendid articles on the works of Arthur Machen (as RMF137) as you have done. What is cool about a water tank was.

**GARY MARSHALL - PILOT MOUNTAIN, NORTH CAROLINA**

**I BOUGHT A COPY** of *Rue Morgue's 200 Alternative Horror Films You Need to See*. I'll admit that despite my 50+ odd years of serious horror film addiction, I have likely missed some worthy titles, and who better to help me fill in the gaps than the trusted "authorities" at *Rue Morgue*? I read the book cover to cover, and felt more than a little self-congratulatory satisfaction that I had seen 65 percent of the films mentioned (and owned copies of about two-thirds of those). I find up my Netflix queue and added every invisible flick in the book that had previously eluded me over the past 50 years. I eagerly watched them and then wondered just how much more powerful the pot was in Canada than in the US, because calling some of these flicks "crazy" would be an utter disservice to the world. *Who Can Kill a Child?*, *Jessie*, *Season of the Witch*, *Rue Morgue*, *DMTG*, *Vampyr*? Seriously, what were you smoking? The *Sawneys*? You gotta be fucking kidding me. Enough back to my Netflix queue, where I waited so long in shipping it clean of every single title bearing the RM stamp of approval. Sorry guys, but your credibility is gone. Sure, I may miss a few gems by taking the remainder out of my queue, but it *Rue Morgue's* any indicates, I'm more than willing to take the gamble. But I am looking forward to the book's sequel (Well, thumbing through it at the newsstand - no way I'll be spending a nickel on that one.) I'm kinda regretting my purchase of the first volume.

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[We appreciate that you support 65 percent of the advertisement - cheers! - Ed.]



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# Treadlines

NEWS HIGHLIGHTS & HORROR HAPPENINGS

## HARRYHAUSEN ART SHOW COMING TO LOS ANGELES

Tributes to Ray Harryhausen continue, in the wake of his May 7 death, with one of the latest being an art show dedicated to the stop-motion effects pioneer and the many "incredible creatures" he brought to the big screen during his eight-decade-long career. Resident and guest artists of the Hive Gallery and Studios, in Los Angeles, are preparing for The Ray Harryhausen Tribute Show, which will run from October 5 to November 2.

"To say Harryhausen has been an influence is an understatement," explains show curator and gallery owner Nathan Cartwright. "I make sculptures that move and animate, and I was infatuated with the 7th Voyage of Sinbad and Clash of the Titans. I love Ray's use of small to large characters and immersion in mythology. Everything I create is soaked in symbolism and myth."

The show will represent a wide variety of media; contributors will include painters, sculptors, filmmakers, video game animators and even an embroiderer. The list of artists currently includes Grant Fuhrst, Emily Hilburg, Anna Briffell, Thomas Lynch III, Javier Gots, Moray Haber, Rik Roberts, Sean Regalado, Stephen Sandwell, Kiler Klovns from Outer Space director Stephen Chiodo and Augie Pagan, whose art is pictured.

Also contributing to the exhibit is Ellen Schinderman, one of the Hive's resident artists, who says that the contributors were not necessarily handpicked because they're Harryhausen fans, but joined the show because of its curator.

"Nathan sends out a monthly email to the Hive artists—the bees," if you will—and at the end of those monthly emails, he always lists what the upcoming show themes are for the next few months," Schinderman notes. "Sometimes they have outside curators, but if they're his shows, I generally just say, 'Hey, I have an idea for that show,' and he says, 'Great!'"

This time it was actually one of the artists who



Augie Pagan brings a whimsical touch to his Cyclops-inspired piece.

got the ball rolling, points out Cartwright.

"Artists will often say, 'You should do this kinda theme or that,' and Augie Pagan suggested this one about a year ago. Harryhausen passed away and I'd already had it in my head that we wanted to work with this theme, so October seemed the month to do it, with the timing and circumstances."

The gallery's mission statement reveals that Hive artists "seek to break down the quiet, traditional, art-on-white-walls, viewing experience and create a gallery atmosphere that is as equally alive as its artwork." Typically, many of the exhibitors at the Hive employ satire, im-

provance and/or eroticism to create cutting-edge artwork. Serious art collectors as well as cineastes and comic book geeks frequent the shows there, wherein they find art that tends to mock pop sensibilities.

"I choose my themes on a year-to-year basis and gear them around various months," says Cartwright. "Every June, we have a show loosely based around the circus. Every October, [we have] something horror or Halloween-themed."

For more information on the Hive Gallery and Studios and The Ray Harryhausen Tribute Show, visit [hivegallery.com](http://hivegallery.com).

SCOTT FENIMATT



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# FX ARTIST TOM WOODRUFF, JR. TO HELM FIRST FEATURE



Tom Woodruff Jr., playing the demon Rulus in *Fire City*, confronts detective John Apter, played by G. Thomas Howell

After spending nearly 30 years as a special-effects artist on films such as *The Monster Squad*, *Twins* and *Starship Troopers*, Tom Woodruff, Jr. is heading to the director's chair for his first feature. Woodruff, who won an Academy Award for his work on the 1992 film *Double Exposure*, will helm the independently produced, FX-heavy *Fire City*. The indie version of *Sages Shooting* is expected to begin in January 2014.

The film, scripted by producers Brian Lubock and Michael Hayes, will combine elements of hor-

ror and not slide into a fantasy world, which would detract from the story and the characters.

Lubock and Hayes originally conceived *Fire City* as a web series several years ago—a way for the frustrated screenwriters to collaborate and realize a story of their own creation. They began by contracting choice elements of their favorite genres—horror and fantasy for Lubock, thrillers and noir for Hayes—and came up with something that, according to Lubock, hopefully combines the “great creatures and mythologies of movies like *Halloween*, *Alien* and *Lord of the Rings*, the great feel and look of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, [and] the gritty storytelling of classics like *Chinatown* and *The Maltese Falcon*.”



*Fire City* launched a Kickstarter crowd-funding drive in July, and, despite the modern financing plan, Woodruff sees the film as a return to a more classic type of genre filmmaking. And though the project represents a big step up the creative ladder for him, the Stan Winston protégé says he'll still take an active role in popu-

lating the story's demonic underworld.

“When practical effects were the leading technique throughout the ‘80s and early ‘90s, we had much more of a value in creature design and execution,” Woodruff notes. “We had some very sup-

portive and experienced directors and producers back then who gave us the room to function creatively. Then the studios became too involved, micromanaging as if it was business only and devoid of art. [He boggles the round-table of producers and executives to satisfy, the smaller the chances of having enough people satisfied to be able to produce something new and of merit.]... We’ve spent a lot of years on a lot of projects swimming upstream. These guys give us the opportunity to do what we do best so, yes, *Alien* and I will create and direct the concept and execution of creatures and effects.” (Incidentally, the Kickstarter model has already proven successful for *Skins*, who recently completed a crowd-funding campaign for his upcoming sci-fi/horror feature *Warbringer Doves*.)

Since Woodruff also knows his way around the inside of a monster suit—he portrayed *The Monster Squad*’s Old Man and *Pumpkinhead*’s Blatter Beasts, among others—he’ll have a turn in front of the camera as well, as an eight-foot-tall demon called Mollusk.

Plans for the world of *Fire City* are ambitious, to say the least. According to Hayes and Lubock, the franchise will hopefully include feature films, a comic book, a “demon compendium” book, short stories, video games (the producers have already met with game developers), and even a 91-cord demon hot truck. A short film called *Fire City: King of Monsters*, directed by Woodruff, is already available for viewing at [finchcity.com](http://finchcity.com).

APRIL SWELLINGS

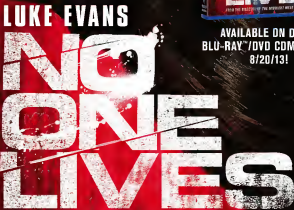
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 2013-2014: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
 2014-2015: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
 2015-2016: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
 2016-2017: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
 2017-2018: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
 2018-2019: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
 2019-2020: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
 2020-2021: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
 2021-2022: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)  
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 2024-2025: "The Last Days of Pompeii" (TV Series)



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# CORONER'S REPORT

WEIRD STATS & MORBID FACTS

CASE NO. **136**

Colleen S. Burns woke up on an organ transplant table in 2009, just moments before surgeons were set to make their first incision; she had been incorrectly declared brain-dead.

When CBS Records turned down John Landis' request for \$500,000 to shoot the 1983 video for Michael Jackson's "Thriller," he raised the money by selling *The Making of Thriller* behind-the-scenes doc to start-up cable network Showtime.

In June, a Michigan man ripped off part of his penis and nearly died of blood loss after allegedly consuming some hallucinogenic mushrooms.

Actor Brad Pitt (*World War Z*) suffers from ichthyophobie (a fear of sharks).

A 25-year-old Florida man was arrested on charges of animal cruelty in June after a family member caught him cooking butchered pieces of the family peppy in the stove.

An urban legend persists that Lorne Greene, host of the wildlife series *Carolee Greene's New Wilderness*, had one of his nipples bitten off by an alligator while filming a segment.

A pair of Russian teens have been arrested after allegedly using an axe, saw and various knives to cut the head off of a homeless man. The duo is said to have played soccer with it.

Daniel Hoelzel accidentally set his throat onstage during a 2006 theatrical production of Mary Stuart Victoria's Theatre after his prop knife was switched out for a real one. The audience initially thought it was all the elaborate special effect.

An old, rural European custom dictates that when a farmer passes on, his eldest son should walk the farmland informing the livestock of his death.

American painter Benjamin West (1738-1820) once had a corpse exhumed, then crucified, just so he could study how the body hung on the cross.

Texas police found themselves with a mystery this July after a group of kids discovered a child's corpse under a tarp in the middle of a residential Fort Worth street.

To increase the perceived size of the dead "Space Jockey" alien in 1979's *Alien*, Ridley Scott filmed his children in miniature space suits.

The body of a woman, missing for 30 years, was found embalmed behind a basement wall earlier this summer when her hoarder husband's house was being cleaned out following his death. Authorities now suspect him of the crime.

COMPILED BY MONICA & KIMBERLY  
FOR A WEIRD STAT OR MORBID FACT SEND IT TO: [MONICA@WEIRD.COM](mailto:MONICA@WEIRD.COM)

## BODY HORROR

PUMPKINHEAD  
ARTIST: Dan Ross ([horrorartinfo.com](http://horrorartinfo.com))

"We did this Pumpkinhead tribute a few years back over the course of a few different sessions. Now (the collector) is a huge horror fan and has been a client of mine since about 2002. We've done quite a few different projects on her over the years, including 'Masters of Horror' portraits piece on her (think featuring Bowie, Ford and Powers), and a large 'Dreadhound' piece on her (obviously).

## THE RUC MURDER SICK TOP SIX BIO-MECHANICAL MONSTERS



1. **TETSUO: THE IRON MAN**  
MANIC SCRAP-METAL MUTANT
2. **FRANKENSTEIN'S ARMY**  
REANIMATED NAZI NIGHTMARES
3. **VIRUS**  
HIGH SEAS CYBORG
4. **MANBOG**  
STOP-MOTION GEAR GLADIATOR
5. **MEATBALL MACHINE**  
ANGUISHED ALIEN BATTLE-BOTS
6. **JASON X**  
SPACE STATION SLASHER

**TORTURED TAGLINES**

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FARMERS (1972)**

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AND HARVESTED THE DEAD!**



TWO THINGS WERE LEARNED THAT NIGHT—YOU COULDN'T STOP SOMETHING WICKED FROM COMING WITH A BUCKET OF WATER, AND THE WEARD OF OG WAS FULL OF GEAR.

See more of Jay's work at [jaypforsthy.com](http://jaypforsthy.com)

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# NEEDFUL THINGS



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The walking dead are known more for their passion for their signature dish than for their oenophile, but this roller doesn't seem fussed. He may have drunk himself into an early grave, but he'll still cling to your wine bottle like his an-life depended on it. Living dead libations at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).



## 2 SILENCE OF THE LAMBS WINES \$32

Looking for a nice Clarice to pair with some farm beans and eggs? Check out The Countess, a cheeky Hannibal Lecter-inspired red. There's also a companion Pinot Grigio called Salt Rose, if you feel like downing a skunk. Hues an old friend for dinner—and drinks—at [silenceofthelambwines.com](http://silenceofthelambwines.com).



## 3 ELVIRA COFFIN PURSE \$42

Next time you're out prowling the night, cram your assets into this Elvin-branded coffin-shaped purse. The purple bone handle makes it the perfect accessory for haunting eyeliner, red lipstick, or whatever other angsty items you usually keep in there. Go to hell in a handbag at [krogerville666.com](http://krogerville666.com).

## 4 VHS HORROR PILLOWS \$25

Planning to hunker down with your TV and a pile of video nasty clematis? Get comfy on a VHS-shaped pillow! Customize it with one of 21 classic labels, ranging from The Blue-Through Chopping Man to Street Trash. They're attached with Velcro, so you can even switch them up to match your evening's viewing. Curl up with a cassette at [horrordecor.net](http://horrordecor.net).



## CRYPTIC COLLECTIBLES

### TOWER OF TERROR PLAYSET

(Toyco Recreational Products Inc., 1993)

One of several playsets produced by now-defunct Montreal-based company Toyco Recreational Products Inc., this 60-plus-piece Tower of Terror set included a 24" x 36" (2 x 3') plastic terrain sheet illustrated with skeletons, bats and tarantulas, a spooky cardboard castle, and a collection of 27-bit plastic demons, gnomes, wic-

nds, plus a dragon. Seemingly moulded from a line of previously released toys from Dinorations for Children (DFC), the set is difficult to find and can fetch \$60 to upward of \$400.

JAMES BURRELL

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HORROR TO THEATRES

BY  
DAVE ALEXANDER  
INTERVIEW BY  
TREVOR TUMINSKI

ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS WE LEARN TO FEAR  
ARE THE ANIMALS IN THE WOODS THAT WANT  
TO KIDNAP US OR KILL US OR BOTH.

The holy trinity, "Three Little Pigs" and "Little Red Riding Hood" teach us that wolves will stop at nothing to get inside, while "Hansel and Grädel" and "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" warn us that witches and beasts might meet us as we go through the

wrong door. Similarly, classic slasher stories assure us that we're safe in our homes as long as we don't invite the ghosts inside. Home is where the heart is, but be warned: If you aren't careful, you just might get yours ripped out.

In a world where the words "home invasion" are a regular part of the daily news, that folklore is more pertinent than ever, so it's no surprise filmmakers have reimagined those ancient fears. The last decade has seen a small boom in home-invasion horror movies, including *The Strangers*, *Disturbia*, *Funny Games*, in *Wear Skin* and *The Pledge*, but the best of the bunch is *You're Next*, from Australian filmmaker Adam Wingard, a writer/director we've covered several times before for his celebrated indie genre films *Paper Moon* and *A Hardhead Boy* (see JRMV 118).

Wingard built his reputation on a style of American indie art horror that adopts some of the tenets of mumbojans, a film movement that appeared in the early 2000s that favors very low budgets, natural performances and dialogue (often improvised)—sometimes utilizing non-professional actors to help achieve these goals.

*You're Next* is his most misanthropic film, though it retains some of that aesthetic, namely naturalistic performances and dialogue.

Reverted to 2009's Midnight Madness parties at the Toronto International Film Festival, where Wingard stole audiences go wild for James Wan's *Insidious* and decided to make a crowd-pleaser of his own for genre fans. A couple years later he was back at Midnight Madness with the world premiere of *You're Next*. Finally in theatres this month from E1 Films, it's a horror fan's honor movie, which is to say that it delivers the scares, the violence, the gore, the gore, along with believable characters, strong performances, a suspenseful plot with wild twists, plenty of technical prowess and just the right amount of humor to be playful rather than punishing.

After an opening stinger that sees a couple slaughtered by a figure in a white animal mask who shows up at their door, the story begins with a journey to a house in the woods. Film Australian actress Shantel Mason (Austen the upcoming remake of *Portrait*) is driving with her boyfriend Crispian (A.J. Bowen: *The Sign*, *Witcher 2*, *The House of the Dead*) to meet his parents and siblings at the family's rural mansion. Barbara Crispian (Jo-Anne Weaver: *From Beyond*, *Castle Frank*) plays loving matriarch Audrey, who along with her defense contractor husband welcomes home their four children and the siblings' significant others. Among the five visitors is the hailing estate is a filmmaker played by director T.W. West (*The House of the Dead*), the Antwerp-wasp character's older brother Drake, played by director Joe Swanberg (*Knives*) and over a dozen animals considered to be part of the mumbojans movement. The final,







nervous, brother Felix (Nicholas Tucci) and his aloof girlfriend Zoe (Woody Olden). Amy Seimetz—who's worked with Wingard and Sarabong on several occasions—is determined sister Anna, and Kevin Nashewiler Simon Barrett (Dead Shit, *A Marvellous Way to Die*, *WINGS*) appears later as an unlikely guest.

The film shows its sense of humour in the caustic interchanges between the siblings, particularly Crapan and Drake. As the two go at each other's throats over dinner, it takes the rest of the room a few minutes to notice an arrow smashing through the window into one of the guests' skulls. A barrage of projectiles follows and the family finds itself trapped in the mansion by mysterious armed figures who lurk outside in tipis, lamb and fox masks (a fairy tale nod). In the midst of the chaos, Erin—whose survivalist father taught her well—takes charge. As the others devise an escape plan, she sets about making vicious traps and aiming herself against the killers. Things get very gruesome very quickly. Strong, resourceful and clever as hell, Winona's character delivers on Barrett's final girl archetype, while Wingard makes sure she gives as good as she gets and kills some.

For a guy with only a few, decidedly non-mainstream, features under his belt, the director proves to be a master of knowing what makes the genre tick. Settle slasher nods include a *Friday*-like 12th-style machine killing, some bloody writing on the wall that reads *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and a brutal head nod to *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, which earned the film its modern folklore about cursed teenagers. Man is now the spirit of our dooming scratching to get in.

Once upon a time, after the film's premiere, we sat down with Wingard, Barrett

and Winona to open the book on *You're the Worst* and learn more about what lies behind this masterful modern-day horror fairy tale.

**Ades, you're stuck picking that you typically pick a scapular then put your own spin on it, or fall in love with your gods with *You're the Worst*.**

**WIN** I definitely wanted to take a different turn with this film. For instance, I knew I wanted there to be a decent amount of hand-held (camera) work, but I wanted to take a different approach to it than I usually do. I wanted a steadier hand to it. Being in, I watched a lot of movies with my DP, Andrew (Drew Pileggi). This was his first time doing a feature film, but he had an aesthetic [that is] very similar to mine, yet a little bit more precise, and I wanted to get somebody like that because I wanted to do more of a refined kind of tale. Overall, I wanted the film to feel more like the type of experience a mainstream audience could feel comfortable with. I wanted to do some unique stuff—slow motion and some nice dolly stuff here and there—but by and large I was trying to do a movie that could appeal with the same cinematic language that a Hollywood movie does.

**And what was the concept of trying to do that? With *A Horrible Way to Die*, for example, it's in the well-worn serial killer category, yet you still stand out like in *A. Worst* the other here?**

**WIN** The usual for me is, stylistically, there's a lot of experimentation going on. I want to try to do things that maybe I've not seen before, maybe a mash-up of things,



*Revels Of An American Family: A 19th-century artist's vision of the nation's mid-class, Ben Chilton's vision is a blood*



# YOU FEEL LIKE YOU'RE IN THERE WITH THIS FAMILY, REALLY EXPERIENCING YOUR WORST ABSOLUTE NIGHTMARE.

SHARON VINSON

for instance, taking mumblecore and trying to add a stylistic touch to it. *Pop Skull* was about doing something really trippy that would affect you under the influence of drugs. But with this film, the experiment was, "Am I actually capable of doing a film that could play in 2008 theaters?" I recognize the evolution would be to swallow my ego and say, "Can I actually make a movie in the conventional sense?" That said, I don't think *For the Night* is a conventional film. I wanted to take things that people were more or less used to seeing and kinda flip it and do it in a fresh way — same way that we've been approaching genres in general. So the whole thing was like a game. Whenever you're working with more [abstract/avant-garde] cinematic language, you realize that you have to — even if you're doing it in an interesting way — still abide by certain laws. It means you're going to have to get twice as much coverage — well, not twice as much, six times as much coverage as I'm used to — and you're just going to work that much harder. But the results are just so much more gratifying being able to really just enjoy your film as a film.

*The crowd at the premiere felt absolutely bizarre for the movie, particularly the Sharon's character.*

**EW:** When Sharon starts taking charge, the audience has this shift where at first they're really just enjoying the film, but I think that once they realize that this movie isn't trying to punish them or shock them like most home invasion movies do, you can really feel a catharsis in the room. It's kind of unexpected, because in shooting it we weren't really thinking about the consequences of that; it was like, "Well, this is just what happens in the script, so I'm going to fight back." We didn't realize that the audience would get so behind it. Even just when you stab the one guy to the wall, immediately there's a huge clap, and it just keeps building and building and building. Sharon does each a brilliant job of being able to escalate that performance was. The thing I love about what she does in the film is that she doesn't try to pose as the Indiana henchman, she shows up and embodies a real person, like any real badass would. If you're actually a badass you don't have to prove to everybody that you're a badass.

*Sharon, your performance does escalate to the point where it's really scary to be taking*

*on some kind of policy with the bank.*

**EW:** I think at one point she says, "I want to survive." She has learned these skills. Whether or not she's ever had to utilize them before, I don't even know, but it's something that's instilled in her from her upbringing. And it's a survivalist mode. It kicks in and I think she starts doing what she has to do, and it escalates from there. If a guy is going to come through the window and break the glass and pull her hair and drag her neck to that glass, she's going to die or he's going to die. It's instinct and she probably shakes herself for that first scene, for the first time you see her do anything like that, and it's sort of like, "Shit, it worked!"

**EW:** He will he stops moving.

**EW:** Yeah, well he stops moving. That first attack is so brutal and I don't think the audience were it necessarily going that far like she's got him after one, two, the third which, he's down. He's probably dead at that point but that doesn't stop her from getting on him, dead just going absolutely crazy.

**EW:** And that's what I like about the character.

**EW:** You gotta finish the job, you know.

*Sharon, did you change the character as her an updated version of the First Lady? It's eyes, nothing just the script in a way that her job is a political adviser that way.* It was definitely something Adam and I talked a lot about. I think it goes back to how tough women in horror films are portrayed in a way that almost always feels inevitable to me because they're written by male screenwriters who also don't really like women and it's portraying toughness in strong female characters is always portrayed as costuming and mask, like they're just a pleasant people. After *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, I had a conversation with a friend of mine who had a friend that the female in that film was more powerful, and I said, "Well, that would just be stupid and not realistic to expect that character was and what that film was about," but then I started thinking about how I would write a tough First Lady as a real person. And the key for me was the idea



# THE PACK

BY SCOTT FEINBLATT

**ONCE IN A WHILE, A CASH OF HORROR FILMMAKERS ESTABLISHED A RAPPORT WHEREIN THE INDIVIDUALS PERFORM ALTERNATIVE JOBS WITHIN ONE ANOTHER'S PRODUCTIONS.** In many of these instances the filmmakers wind up acting in the films — alongside some of the various performers that they likewise share. Examples of this include *The Evil Dead Gang* (Sam Raimi, Bruce Campbell, Robert Tapert, Josh Bredar, Joel Corn, etc.), *The Living Dead Gang* (George A. Romero, Tom Savini, John Henson, Pasquale Buba, John Angulas, etc.) and *The Lovecraft Gang* (Stuart Gordon, Brian Yuse, Dennis Paoli). The latest is *The You're Next Gang*. Here's how filmmakers who produce/act/direct/act as Adam Wingard, Ti West, Simon Barrett and Joe Swanberg fit together.

	 <b>A HORRIBLE WAY TO DIE</b> (2010)	 <b>WHAT FEW WE WERE HAVING</b> (2011)	 <b>TIPS 50</b> (2011)	 <b>THE ARCS OF DEATH</b> (2011)	 <b>PUCK'S NEXT</b> (2011)	 <b>WHEN WE DIED</b> (2011)	 <b>THE SACRAMENT</b> (2013)
 <b>SIMON BARRETT</b>	Writer, Producer, Actor (Shawn), First Assistant Director	Actor	"Tape 50" Writer, Producer, Actor (Shawn), Camera Operator	Actor	Writer, Producer, Actor (Tiger Mask)	"Tape 49" Writer, Executive Producer, Director	
 <b>JOE SWANBERG</b>	Actor (Kevin)	Actor, Producer	"Second Honeymoon" Actor (Sam)		Actor (Duke)		Actor (Jake)
 <b>TI WEST</b>			"The Sick Thing That Happened to Emily When She Was Younger" Director, Producer, Editor, Sound Designer				
 <b>ADAM WINGARD</b>	Director, Editor, Camera Operator	Director, Cinematographer, Editor, Writer	"Tape 50" Director, Cinematographer, Edit, Actor (Brad), Camera Operator	Director, Producer, Editor "Q Is for Quack"	Director	"Phase I Clinical Trials" Director, Editor, Actor (Hemlock)	"Tape 49" Editor, Executive Producer, Set Photographer

of someone who's secretly strong because her boyfriend is kind of a wimp, so she hides it. I had never seen that dynamic before but it suddenly felt very real to me, in those slashier movies of horror films, toughness is always worn on the sleeve, but a real tough person doesn't always talk about how tough they are — they just are that way.

**JAW:** What's funny is that quite often we've been asked if we made a feminist horror movie, and basically the answer to that is I don't think we set out to make a feminist horror film, but I think the difference is we don't hate women, and that's all it is. We're not going to overly sexualize them for no reason. In a lot of horror movies, the standards are low to a certain degree because a lot of times I think horror filmmakers end up just acting



out some sort of fantasy when it comes to women, including trying to create tough women, which comes out as an ultra-macho fantasy.

**EW:** At no point did Adam and I get together and talk about making a feminist horror film. But perhaps we did make one by default and Sierra's performance, I think, is also key to that, which is why we were so excited when we first met her, when we first saw her take on the character. It's because she got the idea that a tough person just to that way and doesn't need to show it at first. So yeah, we definitely were trying to do something original with the Final Girl archetype.

**EW:** Also about *It's Scarier Than Your Night on Barbara*

**EW:** Sierra was actually the one who actively mentioned her as somebody of interest. And it just kind of made sense, taking a classic screen queen and putting her in this mature role. Barbara was in retirement when we got her, and she just worked perfectly. She's a totally brilliant actress and it's kind of funny because I think she got bitten by the acting bug again. I think she's looking to get back into it a little bit more.

**EW:** She went and got herself an agent because of this film.

**EW:** Yeah, it's funny because she didn't have a Twitter account prior to this but she's like the Twitter Queen now. She immediately picked it up; she's totally savvy to it.

**New collective feelings are refreshing because it drives me crazy when I watch a movie and I'm like, "We are would not that way. Your friend is sleeping in front of you with a bloody stick over his head, and you're asking, 'Are you okay, man?' The would be more, like, "OH MY GOD!"**

**EW:** As an actor, that sort of thing drives me crazy. There's not really a moment in this film that I feel that way. Everything happens because it has to happen that way.

**And that's key to the intention of the film and make the film as much scarier. Why do you think home invasion films are so close to reality? Why do people love it?**

**EW:** As a child every single person has that moment where you hear a noise in the house or you're home alone and you freak yourself out while you're watching something on TV that's a bit scary. Or if you're asleep at night and you hear a strange noise or you sort of go up but you have this hesitation about opening your door and you can't help it but you look out and you're just a bit scared that somebody could be there. As a kid, my worst nightmare was somebody coming into my home and killing my family. And I think everyone has had that dream as a kid of some parent, you know. This movie, making it, I just saying, "This is everybody's worst nightmare actually coming to life," and the way it's told is just so scary that you know do forget that you're watching a film, you feel like you're in there with this family, really experiencing your worst absolute nightmare.

**EW:** It's everybody's worst fear and one of those things you just hear about happening all the time. And often you



Creators Grant And Szelek (clockwise) A later came the movie's first lights back and Aubrey (Barbara Creeping) is watching from outside the window.

everybody has probably had their house broken into at some point. Whether they're home or not. It's just in the back of your head when you've had your house broken into to think, "What if I had been here?"

**EW:** It's one of those primal fears not being able to take care of the people that you love, also it's interesting because home invasion movies are kind of ludicrous right now, and obviously we were trying to do something very different, and you know we are part of the audience trend and somehow I think it's also related to the economy and to the fact that people are financially hurting. I think there's a lot of anxiety about that. It's this idea of poor people attacking wealthier people for material gains, which pretty much every home invasion movie is. It has a robbery element, which makes it unusual for a lot of horror cinema.

**The score is vital to the unsettling feeling. How involved were you in the development of it, what kind of direction did you give the musicians who composed it, and why is it important for you to have the music sound not before you start?**

**EW:** I edit everything I do and it really helps me, it gives me guidance — not just in shooting, but in being able to really get a real atmosphere for the score — it's how music that I can throw in there to help inspire me. So, from the get-go, we had my friends Kyle MacLellan and Judson Lee start on the score. One of the first bits that Kyle threw together was what I call the "Grant Theme" in the film. The real synergy. George Morrell (Garbo, 1994's *Get People*) kind of kept going with it, and it's funny 'cause it's such an insane piece of '80s-style electronics that I was, like, "It's amazing but Sierra probably no way that we can make a film that supports

“I DON'T THINK WE SET OUT TO MAKE A FEMINIST HORROR FILM, BUT I THINK THE DIFFERENCE IS WE DON'T HATE WOMEN, AND THAT'S ALL IT IS.”

~~ADAM WINGARD~~

**EW** From these creepy people that are trying to kill for money?

**EW** It should be in a gallery, but these are supposed to be traps. I've always been into paper symbols and the creepiness of it and the original *Whisper* film was probably a touch point for this there... Then I got excited by the idea of using that as the symbol for what the characters represent and also some of the themes of the film. You know, like the idea that the scariest one is the most docile animal and the one that's the most ferocious animal is completely innocent.

**EW** Played by Simon Barrett

*you mentioned that there was a particularly eye-catching element of your costumes. Does the way that your costumes designed, Emma Pelling would mind if you told that story?*

**EW** I think she would be delighted! To talk me up she wanted my coat to look like it actually had things in it. She's a detailed enough person that she knows when pockets are full. And the only thing she had [to fill them], apparently, was little get underwear left over from her previous production. So, it just became an element of my character, my character was walking around in a military risk vest filled with little girls' panties in every pocket.

**Spec/Really?**

**EW** Specifically Dakota Fanning's from the film *That Carve* had just done. She brought some extra underwear. I guess. The film—

the music." But, for the first edit, I paid all of the more ominous score that they had done and I showed [the producers] and they thought that the score was too dark, and it wasn't allowing you to have fun. So I started throwing in this more creepy electronic stuff and instantly they thought it was exactly what we were looking for. And so, from that point, while Kyle and Justice were doing the heavy kind of fast-paced horror stuff, I started filling in some of the gaps with a bunch of creepy kind of [John Carpenter stuff and started manipulating it. There's one track in there that I like that's modeled after the music from *Commune*. And then at the very end, we decided to add a touch of a more mainstream score that hit certain beats, so that's when we brought Mads Heldberg [Jensen] in and he did a couple cues for us. It was quite an interesting mixture of people. I think it's technically four composers but

the [film has a very collective feel, because we all did very specialized things while we were all kind of working off of what the movie was. It was an interesting process, and not one that I've ever tried before.

*Why was it necessary to have the killers with the animal masks introduced wearing the masks?*

**EW** We knew we wanted them to be masked, but it gets very difficult to do something original there. And also something that's not completely absurd. When characters walk in wearing these scary, production-designed masks, it does kind of take me out of the movie. It's like, "Where did he get that amazing mask? It looks like it cost several hundred dollars."



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GUILLERMO DEL TORO PITS MECHS AGAINST KAIJU  
CREATURES IN *PACIFIC RIM*, HIS BIGGEST FILM YET

# WORLDWIDE MONSTER WAR

BY  
DAVID KOPPELMAN

**IT'S BEEN 21 YEARS SINCE GUILLERMO DEL TORO REPLENISHED THE WELL-DRAINED VAMPIRE MYTH WITH *DRACULA*, HIS ASSURED AMALGAMATION OF CLASSIC HORROR AND MAGIC REALISM.**

Since that astonishing debut, the Mexican-born director has continued to amaze and unsettle audiences with his work, which often exhibits a rare sensitivity and profound awareness of genre history. After breathing new life into the ghost story with *The Devil's Backbone*, re-energizing the superhero genre with *Blade II* and the *Hellboy* films, and deftly fusing political allegory and the fairy tale with *Pan's Labyrinth*, he now delivers his most ambitious movie to date—the muscular mash-up of giant robots versus giant monsters that is *Pacific Rim*.

When this pre-apocalyptic blockbuster—out now—was first announced by Legendary Pictures more than two years ago, it generated unprecedented levels of excitement amongst the 48-year-old filmmaker's fans. Their discomposure has not only been exacerbated by del Toro's assertion that the movie will boast "the finest fucking monsters ever committed to the screen," but the fact he has not wonned a director's chair since 2008's *Hellboy II: The Golden Army*. Instead, del Toro's considerable talents have been restricted to co-writing or co-producing the likes of *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* and *Mozart*, after he relinquished the helm of *The Hobbit* and saw his long-cherished adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* stall at Universal.

"It was a frustrating period for me and at the same time it wasn't," muses del Toro, sounding seemingly enthralled after *Pacific Rim*'s grueling 103-day shoot and hefty post-production. "Obviously for the longest time I was unaware that neither *The Hobbit* nor *At the Mountains of Madness* was going to come to fruition," but there were many incentives—"I got years—in which I was still happily creating. The only frustration arose from not actually directing on the set, but the pre-production and scouting was fun. I really enjoyed my time in New Zealand [on *The Hobbit*], so it was a little bitter-sweet for me. When I eventually got back on a set with *Pacific Rim* it was almost like I'd only been out of directing for a weekend."

Lensed on over 100 sets—constructed mostly on nine soundstages at Pinewood Toronto Studios—the movie takes place in a near-future where legions of gigantic monsters known as kaiju (for the uninitiated, the literal translation of this Japanese word means "strange beast") have risen from a dimensional rip located in a crevasse beneath the Pacific Ocean. These subterranean creatures are terrifyingly hirsute and laying waste to entire cities. In order to counter this threat, a unique series of combat weapons is devised—colossal robots known as "Jaegers" (incidentally, the German word for "hunter") that are controlled si-



multitasking by two pilots whose minds are linked via a computer interface.

In spite of their best efforts, the Jaegers are failing to the mounting onslaught of increasingly large Kaiju. Preeminent leader Stacker Pentecost (Bill Elio of *Premonition*) is charged with reuniting mankind's demoralized and depleted forces against this relentless enemy. On the cusp of defeat, he has no option but to unite Raleigh Becket (*Sea of Cortez* star Charlie Hunnam), a washed-up former pilot, and Mako Mori (Rieko Kikuchi), an untested rookie, to operate an obsolete Jaeger to engage the ferocious beasts in battle. Together, they're humanity's last hope.

"What first attracted me to *Pacific Rim* was being able to do a movie of this huge scale about kaiju and mechs," recalls del Toro. "This movie was something I thought only hardcore geeks would like; therefore, it would surely be impossible to convince a studio to finance a project like this. I was super-happy to have Legendary not only wanting to do it, but dying to do it! This was a great opportunity for me to invoke all of my childhood fantasies."

Those nostalgic fantasies have gestated in del Toro's imagination ever since his formative years in Mexico during the 1960s and '70s. Gorging on the veritable feast of Japanese films and television relayed in his homeland, he saw everything from Kenta Shindo's classic horror movies *Onibaba* and *Kurokago to Eiga Teburu* to his fondly remembered *Akuma* TV series. *Ultraman* and *Ultraman Q*. He was also privy to the 1963 incarnation of *Tetsuya-28* and such Osamu Tezuka anime as *Astro Boy*.

"Mexico was insanely permeated with Japanese pop culture," he recalls. "Literally, 50 percent of all the entertainment we got around that time was Japanese. This included an anime series called *Gigan Bat* or '*Golden Bat*,' which was about a golden skeleton that fought kaiju. There was also a lot of live-action series like *Comel-Son*, which was basically a childhood show [about a mischievous extraterrestrial princess sent to Earth to learn good manners] that was very influential on me. There was another animated series from Fujiko Fujio called *Pemee* that was about a kid who had a robot. He would pull a button on the robot's nose and it would turn into him so that he essentially had a double. And then there were the kaiju movies like Ishii Honda's *Godzilla*, which is fantastic, and *Frankenstein Conquers the World*, which I actually saw in the theatre."

A genre unto themselves, kaiju movies showcase monsters of enormous size — usually humanoid in appearance and played by an actor in a suit — wreaking havoc on Japanese cities or engaging in fistfights with other kaiju. Del Toro offers a straightforward heartfelt analysis of why these crazy creature features still nourish his soul.



Monster Smash: (top to bottom) Kaiju Armada are transported on an aircraft carrier; Raleigh (Charlie Hunnam) and Mako (Rieko Kikuchi) prepare for battle, and Raleigh's Jaeger versus a taking bite.

"I think it's due to their purity. I've always been a declared fan of the monster movie — a film where you are not trying to hide the monster, but are making a point to reveal it. Kaiju movies almost have an element of pageantry to them. They are a parade of monsters that unabashedly celebrate plastic creatures. When you're a child, it always feels like you are living in an outsize world that doesn't quite fit you. I think kaiju movies are some sort of existential revenge for

kids where the adults now get to feel what it is to be outsize. These films are great power fantasies, especially when you see big monsters crushing buildings and throwing tanks around in a belfry. It's a lot of cheer, crazy fun."

Rather than indulge some aesthetic impulse and do a pastiche of his favorite kaiju pictures, del Toro sought to create something unique. He describes his kaiju as not only impenetrable "forces of nature" but as an aggressive breed of inter-di-



mensional pest exterminators. Engineered by an alien race that dwells in the Andromeda, they have been sent through the portal by their otherworldly masters to clean up the vermin of humanity ahead of an intended colonization of Earth. ("It's almost like sending a fumigation company to clean up an apartment building before you move in," he reasons.)

Talk of gargantuan monsters inevitably steers the conversation toward the recently deceased Ray Harryhausen. Del Toro is quick to acknowledge not only his own debt to the legendary visual effects artist, but the reasons why he's dedicated *Pacific Rim* to the memories of Harryhausen and another deceased giant of fantasy, Ishirō Honda, who directed the first *Godzilla* and several other films in the series.

"Harryhausen and Honda created most of the large-scale monsters of my youth, and in terms of the giant monsters we are describing in *Pacific Rim*, they are the two masters of all time," he says. "Harryhausen is to stop-motion effects what Dick Smith is to makeup. He's the link between the pioneers of the technique like Willis O'Brien and the generation of Monster Kids like Rick Baker, John Landis, Peter Jackson and myself. Harryhausen allowed us all to dream that we could do it ourselves one day by making everything seem exciting and fun-friendly. He was a guy that started as a technician and ended up as an author. I mean you don't say, 'It's a Nathan Juran movie,' you say, 'It's a Ray Harryhausen movie.' That's how big Harryhausen becomes."

In defining the individual look of each monster in *Pacific Rim*, del Toro felt it was perhaps inappropriate to reference another of his great heroes by doing "a Lovecraftian kaiju" — despite the considerable conceptual work already mounted on *At the Mountains of Madness*. Instead, he drew inspiration from his youth.

"Each of the monsters needed to represent some type of kaiju that I enjoyed in my childhood, like a flying kaiju, a reptilian kaiju and a crustacean," he notes. "They look different, which meant it was important to unify them with certain elements of design so that they felt like part of the same family. The kaiju also needed to have some artistry and one way to do that was for all the monsters to have some bioluminescence in them. It was also important to me that the kaiju looked like something you could reproduce with a namé in a suit. I wanted to guarantee that if we actually needed to make every kaiju in the movie with a namé

IN IRISH SEA-MONSTER COMEDY **GRABBERS**, THE ONLY WAY TO AVOID BEING TASTED, IS TO GET WASTED

# GET DRUNK OR DIE

BY PHIL BROWN

**O**VER THE LAST DECADE, IRELAND HAS BEEN IN THE THRODS OF A MINI HORROR BOOM. *SHROOMS*, *DEAD MEAT* AND *WAKE WOOD* HAVE ALL SPRUNG FROM THE LAND OF SHAMROCK AND JAMESON WHISKY.

The country's latest export is *Grabbers*, which sees police officer Lisa Nolan (Ruth Bradley, *Phoenix*) arrive for a temporary placement in a swaggy fishing village on an island off the coast of Ireland, where she and hard-drinking local cop Cláirín O'Shea (Richard Coyle, *Outpost*)

seems destined for cult appreciation both here and abroad. With the movie in theatres from IFC Midnight, screenwriter Kevin Lehane talks about what lurks in the waters of the Emerald Isle.

**CAN I ASSUME HORROR AND SPECIFICALLY MONSTER MOVIES HAVE ALWAYS BEEN OF INTEREST TO YOU?**

Absolutely. I wrote *Grabbers* to be a movie that I would have to see with my friends on opening night, even if it's passing time. It was a love letter to all of the films that I grew up on and the country that I grew up in. I worked at a video shop when I wrote it, so I wanted it to fit firmly on the shelf next to *Gremlins*, *The Thing*, *Trancers* and *Silver* and deserve that spot. It came from '80s monster movies especially. We wanted it to feel like a subversive American movie directed by John Carpenter. Director Jon Wright kept harkening back to *An Amer-*



IT

*Grabbers* isn't just the largest of the country's recent horror productions, but also arguably the best. Laced with self-deprecating humor typical of the local culture, as well as impressive scores and effects, *Grabbers*



**Tentacle Spectacle:** (L to R) Lisa (Ruth Bradley), Dr. Smith (Russell Tovey) and Cláirín (Richard Coyle) investigate a vehicle taken by one of the grabbers

can blow out in *Avatar*, a very funny movie that never loses track of being a horror movie first and fantasy.

**WAS IT TROUGH TO FIND THAT BALANCE BETWEEN HORROR AND COMEDY?**

No, because I sort of identified with movies that gave me goose bumps, but were generally funny. Even something like *Scream*, which is a very scary film, never lost track of trying to make you jump. The characters can be hilarious, but the villain — whoever it is, be the godfather or the killer in *Scream* or even the grandma — must be a legitimate threat and can't back around. We wanted to keep it very grounded and let the humor come out of the situation. We played it real and made sure that nobody had their tongue in their cheek too much.

**HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE CHARACTERS?**

That came about when I was backpedaling. I was traveling with a friend who never got bitten by mosquitoes, which I was annoyed. People would say, "that blood is sweet." If you cut into a piece, the victim is going into your mouth and they would say "it's not bad, but I was so desperate that I choked down this disgusting mosquito for weeks. So weeks in, I was getting frustrated with a group of mosquitoes and getting bit again. I said, "Wouldn't it be better if I could give them blood poisoning?" That was it. The next morning I wrote in my journal, "Get drunk tomorrow." When I got back, I thought, "Well, it's got to be an Irish movie, because where else could it be off?"

**ANY WORRIES ABOUT STEREOTYPING?**

[Laughs] It is hard to be that people outside of Ireland say, "offended at our take." The Irish have a very historical shame and a very dark sense of humor, so we take the plot out of ourselves more so we're Irish anyone else.

**IT'S PRETTY AMBITIOUS FOR A LOW-BUDGET FILM.**

I just wonder what was the hell I thought would be good. I knew if you had this concept, you had to deliver. So I included everything drunk driving and sneaking into the markets, motorcycle chases, everything. It wasn't too expensive, but it was about \$2 to \$3 million more than we could pull off, so we made big changes. So something is a weird plot because at a certain point you have to become a bit of a producer and change things because they're more economically viable other than the most creative idea.



Guinness on the streets of Dublin

"I'm not, we said, it wouldn't look as good or be as acceptable to an audience. But we could reproduce it."

In spite of all Tech's obvious advantages to the value and tactile quality of practical effects, some reports state that as much as 80 percent of *Avatar*'s moving budget for a movie consumed by its 12,000 visual effects shots. Whether those figures are accurate or not, there can be no doubt he was committed to traditional technology and real-world mix along with the computer-generated imagery.

"The problem that in some movies CG is not only the one tool being used, it's what I'd call 'buggy CG,' the vehicle. 'This personality, generally, talk, and you almost feel these shots are

showing up and we're on the screen paying the price. When pushed, to deal with the potentially limited capacity of electricity being used, I could also demand reply in order to coming the limited way and difficulty of operating a giant ship in combat. Each time the *Avatar* there a push of two feet a blow in water, the impact was registered by the mobile set which rocked, rumbled and vibrated accordingly — much to the discomfort of the unfortunates crew members locked in the painted flight simulator or the 'Two steam-ship with the 'bunker machine'."

"Every single guy who when it there — because we're working with guys who were in the boat plus and the boat like of music — I thought of those who were on the machine before them," he re-

calls. "They were like, 'Oh, you're a wing! What are you complaining about?' Then they would go in and eventually break down themselves in fact, some of them broke down on the way that day. The only one who didn't was the girl, Kelly. She was the strongest."

In staging the Jagger's 'operatic' conflicts with the Kelly, all Tech sought to give each battle its own distinct environment and aesthetic. The first fight occurs in the middle of a swamp set sprinkled with foliage, the second fight is a flashback sequence that evokes the childhood trauma of a character who once witnessed a love affair between her and her best friend in a distant Tokyo, the third and most spectacular fight takes place to be known as "The Battle for Hong Kong."

The sequence begins as a mixture of applying the look and scope of the



specific details. The three to be an up of that, let alone the animation of the expensive elements of the shot."

The combination of analogue and digital effects is particularly impressive in the character of the Jagger. A low-dose "bad head" and interior cockpit set was constructed as a soundstage and eggheads while voluntarily with

more. Little by little it became more complex, growing exponentially into the biggest action scene del Toro has ever attempted. A run-in between multiple Jaegers and kaiju, it commences in the sun, and continues onto the streets of Hong Kong. Heavily influenced by Richard Corbryn's work in *Army of Shadows*, del Toro has excelled the no-die-cut entails vibrant colour-tinged palette on film – something he experimented with on *Hellboy* and *Melroy* but has perfected on *Pacific Rim* with its graphic, painterly colour scheme.

"I wanted to gradually take *Pacific Rim* into cooler territory so that the fans would be able to have a movie with a palette and look unlike anything they've ever seen before. That sequence emerged out of my scouting Hong Kong and seeing it with a filmmaker's eye. I noticed the night sky was full of coloured neon and it was so beautiful and comic-book-like. I started being inspired. When we visited the docks I saw a cargo ship go by and suddenly thought, 'Wouldn't it be neat if the Jaeger used a cargo ship as a base-ball ball? We could do this sort of *Holding On* [the 1973 Joe Don Baker movie in which his character wields a wooden club] shot with the Jaeger dragging along a wooden beam, ready to beat the crap out of something. In a nutshell way!" That idea wasn't scripted. We just started having fun and the Battle of Hong Kong became this gigantic set piece."

One of the criticisms often heaped at summer blockbusters is their failure to reconcile mind-boggling special effects with exploring their characters' emotional and psychological complexities. Although del Toro concedes the as – in a certain extent – also true of *Pacific Rim*, his primary objective was always to establish the film's universe and mythology adjacent to delivering spectacle ("You can't end up doing Chekhov with kaiju!" he quips). Having previously played the political with the poetic in more personal films such as *The Devil's Backbone* and *Pan's Labyrinth*, he's clearly not interested in making a pro-military movie, but remains reticent in divulging what parts of *Pacific Rim* may hold larger symbolic implications.

"It's impossible to make a movie that isn't political as every act of creation, every piece of narrative is political," he argues. "Now, was I aware of it? Yes, I was. I try to make all my decisions be cohesive with who I am. Because I'm not going to make the same kind of action movie that any other director would do – that's what is political about it. I could elaborate, but I feel very shy about it. I don't think this is a film to expand upon because ultimately it's a kaiju vs. mecha movie. It sounds dangerous and unmodest to say that it's going to have any repercussions in the real world."

With *Pacific Rim* in theatres now, and Cranton's stunning new Blu-ray of *The Devil's Backbone* hitting store shelves, this appears to be a monumental time for the director. Currently working on an adaptation of Nikolai Nosov's manga *Monster*, for HBO, as well as scripting a sequel to *Pacific Rim* with

co-writer Travis Beacham, del Toro is hopeful that he can collaborate with Japanese designers this time around (something that was deemed inappropriate on the first film as its pre-production coincided with the devastating tsunami that struck Tokyo in 2011). Needless to say, the prospect of any sequel rests on the commercial fortunes of *Pacific Rim* – something the filmmaker admits is causing his state of mind to fluctuate.

"Sometimes during the day I'm happy and calm. Other times, I'm on the verge of going nuts because I think maybe more can be done to promote it. That's perfectly natural, as every director feels that his or her film isn't being promoted enough. I've no idea if my movie will connect with an audience or not, but I'm very happy for having made it. I'm the happiest I've been in ages. I feel this is the first movie where I'm fiscally and creatively on the same wavelength, and have been fully supported in a way I don't believe I was in the past. *Pacific Rim* is unique in that regard and I'm uniquely proud of it."

**IT WAS IMPORTANT TO UNIFY THEM WITH CERTAIN ELEMENTS OF DESIGN SO THAT THEY FELT LIKE PART OF THE SAME FAMILY.**  
-GUILLERMO DEL TORO



A Big Deal about kaiju: del Toro (left) and Beacham (right) discuss the film's production. Below: del Toro (left) and Beacham (right) in front of the Pacific Rim logo.



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After his stalled Nazi zombies project *Worst Case Scenario*, Richard Raaphorst returns with new WWII horrors in *Frankenstein's Army*

# War Machines

By Peter Dinklage



**"The worst worst movie" Richard Raaphorst understands "are those movies," and it's clear that he doesn't mean "worst" as in "least good" but rather "most disturbing," "most dehumanizing" and "most objectively disgusting."**

Well, on the basis of the Dutch filmmaker's first feature, *Frankenstein's Army*, it would seem that he has just helped prove his own point. Indeed, Dark Sky Films' release of the film (put no way ended an extraordinarily long period of anticipation among those who'd been intrigued by this proposed mash-up of classic monsters and World War I).

The result is what one imagines a collaboration between Hecatonurus Bosch, Dave Barker and Shinya Tsukamoto might look like if they decided to update Mary Shelley... minus the empathy we tend to feel for her famous monster or its tormented creator. High praise? Sure, but no less than what fans have expected from Raaphorst ever since a trailer for a yet-to-be-made feature called *Worst Case Scenario* first lit the internet way back in 2005 (he secured his first financing deal as early as Cannes 2004). With a plot that posited a answered invasion of dead Nazis as a retaliation for a soccer victory by the Netherlands over Germany, the film seemed liked a can't-miss combo of unrepentant humor and stunningly creepy zombie-soldiers, its tagline: "The Only Dead German is a Living German." Another trailer surfaced, this one with zombies and hot-air balloons (!), and the buzz intensified. A year or two passed. Then producer-director Brian Koppelman, who Raaphorst had worked with as a key artist on the

film *Beyond Re-Animator* and *Day of the Dead*, became involved and *Worst Case Scenario* seemed like a done deal. But by 2008 the project was sputtering, and in 2009 it was officially declared dead (though not in the good, zombie sense), "having run out of financing possibilities" (The Dutch Film Fund decided to back other domestic projects.)

Even today, though, you can find trailers for *Worst Case Scenario* on YouTube complete with comments to the effect of "Why hasn't this come out yet?"—and replies by Raaphorst himself explaining that the idea has been "vindicating" as *Frankenstein's Army* in essence, the new film is the reanimated corpse (in the good sense) of the former project. Leveraging the goodwill among jammers and fan sites that he'd generated with *WCS*, Raaphorst put together an impressive sketchbook of creature designs spun off from the "dead Nazis" premise and used it to secure backing from international sources such as XYZ Films. An obvious change, though, was the shift from zombies to sterling half-media monstrosities that liberated the notion that war turns its participants into killing machines. In keeping with this decision to be mindful of history but not exploit it, Raaphorst resolved that his take on *Frankenstein* would show the character "dehumanized."

"During war, the ground under your feet just disappears, and you have to be a very strong person to know what is good or right," he explains. "If all morality is gone, who tells you how to behave humanistically? Those questions are bigger than me because I've never experienced something like [World War II]. I only know it from second-hand material, and from family who were in the war, but I want to be very careful having an opinion about this because it's much bigger than anything I can ever relate to."

Aside from exploring the notion of morality during wartime, the filmmaker also wanted to trade the more objective, epic scope of *Worst Case Scenario* in favor of the immediacy of a found-footage approach. It's a device that's stressed at the outset of *Frankenstein's Army*, which focuses on a small outfit of Soviet troops pushing their way into German territory. A tagalong officer is capturing their experiences for use in future propaganda films, and at first his intentions seem more annoying than manipulative to the fighting men. They come to a town where the locals live at ominous doings in the manner of a classic *Hammer* flick, wherein travelers are warned about certain forests and castles after dark. The sense of unease is confirmed when the Soviets encounter a church cemetery that seems to have been looted for its bodies. "What kind of church is this?" asks one of the soldiers. The reply: "It's more like a factory..."

Soon, the soldiers must confront far greater horrors, and in this respect *Frankenstein's Army* uses the well-worn strategy of revealing its monsters bit by bit. Since the Soviets are concerned, first for tactical reasons and later for simple survival, with infiltrating Frankenstein's lair, it fits that they encounter more and more of his hellish creations as they penetrate into the deeper circles of his domain.

"I was very much aware of [story structure]," Rasphorist confirms. "That's why all the creatures are so different from each other. And if you analyze the designs, you'll notice that the first creature is completely naked and human, almost, without any mechanical objects. And it builds up — I give them more prosthetics and more stuff, and they become weirder and weirder."

That may be the understatement of the year. As our hapless heroes (and anti-heroes) seek refuge amidst a never-ending mass of deadly lit corridors, new nightmares appear from every corner. The ones that are apt to stay with viewers include a teddy bear-based freak, the mosquito-like construct shown on the film's posters, and the jaw-cropping "Propeller-Head," whose artistic conception Rasphorist describes as a "joy."

But that's just the start of this particular army's roll call: One creature appears to have a washer-dryer unit for a head, another has a power drill for a mouth, and a third appears to be part crustacean. Meanwhile, sibling

like a spider at the center of this hellish web, is their creator, played by Karel Roden (*Dolphin*, *Halbrot*).

"I was really having a hard time coloring in the character of Frankenstein," Rasphorist notes. "Because when you think about his character, you think about something familiar that you already know. And I wanted to do something totally original, new, freshly born, because Frankenstein is a human being."

Roden's portrayal of Viktor (a descendant of the original character) is indeed far more deranged than what we've used to. Sure, he still has a

laboratory, but you can tell that it's like any infamous mad doctor, he has absolutely no qualms about human suffering and death (we're all potential spare parts for him), and b) he can't even all that concerned with scientific



Grat For The Milk Victor (Karel Roden) picks his subject's brain, and (above) the Russian soldiers with their cameraman

**I wanted to do something totally original, new, freshly born, because Frankenstein is a human being.**  
*Richard Rasphorist*

advancement per se. Instead, he's just into attaching machines to the body parts of unwilling participants in any way that strikes his fancy and matches his available inventory.

This isn't the well-meaning and thus slightly tragic figure we might recall from the performances of Colin Clive, Peter Cushing and Kenneth Moreau. Still, it's not an altogether anomalous depiction: we can't help but feel that this is what a Dr. Frankenstein working and thinking through the filter of Nazi ideology might have been like. No longer is he at odds against the short-sighted moralism of the 19th century; he is now free to align himself with those who feel there's absolutely, positively nothing wrong with "playing God."

"I just used the same theme, and put it in a totally different context, which at first sight seems a mismatch," concurs Rasphorist. "But if you look closer [the amoral use of science] is pretty much what happened [in the World War II era]."

Nonetheless, despite the character's cruelty, the director laughingly admits, that as a filmmaker, he identified with the mad doctor "70 percent" of the time.

"Normally you make a plan and you execute the plan, but [this production was] more like a trip, and you don't know exactly what kinds of things you'll meet while going on it. That is something that I love to do. We call









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# CONSPIRACY RESURRECTION

By MICHAEL O'NEILL



CONSIDERING THE GLUT OF THE GENRE PROGRAMMING ON NETWORK TELEVISION TODAY, IT'S EASY TO FORGET WHAT IT WAS LIKE BACK IN THE EARLY 1990S, BEFORE THE PARANOID OPENED AND BROUGHT US ZOMBIES, VAMPIRES, WE'VE GOT AN EXTRA-TERRESTRIALS.

In large part, it was *The X-Files* that helped pave the way for the prime-time genre boom by renewing mainstream TV audiences' interest in monsters, supernatural phenomena and alien conspiracies.

The show, which debuted twenty years ago this fall, aired for nine seasons, spawned two theatrical features (1998's *The X-Files: Fight the Future* and 2008's *I Want to Believe*) and two TV spin-offs (*The Lone Gunmen* and *Millennium*). Now, the franchise is being resurrected once more, this time by IDW, for another run in comics (*X-Files* comics were also produced by Topps from 1995 to 1996, for a run of 41 issues, and in 2008 Wildstorm debuted a one-shot tied to the release of the second film, which was followed by a six-issue miniseries and an *X-Files*/30 *Days of Night* crossover).

"If you had told me I'd have had more *X-Files* to consume, in any form or media, over the recent years, I'd have been thrilled," says Joe Harris, writer of the new *X-Files* "Season 10" series, which picks up in the present day, long after the events of the TV show and films. "But it is the 20th anniversary of the show, and this is a great time to bring it back, because our times fit the concept so well. We're modernizing the paradigm a bit, updating the paranoia in this age of the Patriot Act, war-on-terror, wiretapping, NSA domestic spying, Snowden, wars and unrestricted corporate political contributions to political candidates. What had been paranoia related to the government and the secrets they don't tell us in a post-9/11, post-Holocaust era has metastasized into a stu-

ation where huge corporations lying the convenient flags of myriad multinational governments hold men away over our government and our lives than ever before. It's always been the right time to bring back *The X-Files*. But I would posit that now is the best time."

The first two issues of the monthly title (available now) tackle several of those aforementioned themes, while also catching readers up on what former FBI agents Scully and Mulder have been up to during the years since we last saw them and reminding us of what's come before (in case your memories of *X-Files* lore are a bit foggy). The conspiracies and intrigue are not far behind.

"The first issue really starts off with a bang. I'll tell you that. There's blood. There's gunplay. There's violence and what I at least hope are genuinely scary moments," says Harris, who cites the mythology-heavy third season finale ("Talitha Cum"), which features multiple Jeremiah Smiths, as his all-time favourite episode of the show. "[This] Myther-landed five-issue storyline called 'Believers' sort of gets everyone back up on their feet and re-establishes both the concept for the show, and Mulder and Scully's relationship to it. All this opening series will touch on the alien conspiracy stuff, and propel both that idea, and Mulder and Scully, forward with renewed canon focus and a renewed paradigm, updated in the ways I just mentioned."

As this arc begins, we see Scully pursued down an alley by a group of robed and hooded figures, the panels go dark as they catch her. We soon learn that she has been working as a doctor and that she and Mulder have been living under assumed names. Their peaceful new life is torn asunder when Deputy Director Skinner arrives on their doorstep to alert them that the FBI's computers have been hacked and the entirety of the *X-Files* personnel data has been stolen. Things ramp up fast after that, with the shadowy cabal unsuccessfully attempting to stage a murder to look like a suicide.

By the series' second installment, we have appearances from several other familiar faces, including FBI Agent Doggett and those loopy conspiracy theorists, the Lone Gunmen. Jeremiah Smith and the Bounty Hunter aliens from the TV series are reimagined, and we learn that Scully's son, William, figures into the whole thing somehow as well. And, the cover of issue three hints at the return of the Smoking Man.

"We're going to bring back some classic monsters of the week and even do some direct, full-on sequels to some fan-favourite episodes," Harris reveals. "We'll introduce some new characters, as well as bring back some more old friends, enemies, as well as those kind of grey-area characters from the past whom you can't really peg as one or the other. Then we'll get back into the extra-terrestrial-based stuff, build out the mythology a bit more, and so on. I want to follow the structure of the show, honestly, writing consequential, canon-of-anything and narrative-building stuff that builds upon, and subverts, what we thought we already knew, then break it all up with single-issue stories about monsters, other paranormal investigations, consequential character-based stuff, etc."

The comics also seek to mimic the show's creepy, unsettling and occasionally horrific tone. The art is regular and heavy on the dark tones and a blue/grey



palette, never too bright or carbonish, changes in colour are frequently used for flashbacks, violence and bloodshed are present, but aren't gratuitous.

"Michael Walsh is bringing both excellent depictions of the characters fans know and love, as well as his own tension and vibe," says Harris of the series' art. "Together with our colourist, Jodie Bellars, I'd like to think this book has got this cool little flavour all its own going on. Again, maybe I'm biased... but I think, all at once, we're both delivering what you'd expect in the continuation of the *The X-Files* franchise, as well as something specific to this Season 10 monthly comics series."

While this is true, ultimately it's the story that makes it feel like true, vintage *X-Files*, and IDW has none other than original series creator Chris Carter (see *BMWSO*) on board to advise. He not only consults on the new storylines, but also serves as executive producer of the title.

"Chris is reading my outlines and scripts, offering guidance and advice, as well as steering us away from anything he doesn't want us to do," Harris explains. "He's been very supportive. I take his endorsement of this series very seriously and welcome his input, both as a writer and a reader fan."

Of course, anyone tasked with bringing such a beloved franchise back to life is bound to have some doubts and insecurities. But for Harris, they weren't necessarily the ones that you might expect.

"Writing the characters and building out plot and story from what's already been established has been pretty easy for me, honestly," he confesses. "It's so much fun, I forget the stakes sometimes. And that speaks to what's probably most challenging — the expectations that the fans have."

When I mention anything *X-Files* related on Twitter, it's like I can hear the fabric of the universe crack and moan under the weight. But it's all been pretty cool so far. I feel like the fans of the show I've gotten to interact with have been fantastic, supportive and excited, and I'm resolved to do my best to not let them down. Although last weekend, down at Heroes Con, a woman came up to me and excitedly told me how much she can't wait for *The X-Files* to come back, then implored me, dead-eyed, "Don't fuck it up!" So, yeah... no pressure!"





## DEAD PITT

## WORLD WAR Z

Starring Brad Pitt, Daniella Kertesz and Mireille Darc  
Directed by Marc Forster  
Written by Matthew Michael Carnahan, Drew Goddard  
and Simon Kinberg  
Paramount

You could make a movie about the making of *World War Z*. The project began with a 2007 bidding war over the rights to Max Brooks' book, with Brad Pitt's production company landing it over Leonardo DiCaprio's company. Then, J. Michael Straczynski – creator of *Stargate* 5 and writer on the Thor movie – was hired to script it but then left as it went through various other screenwriters, including *Cabin in the Woods* director Drew Goddard. There were budget concerns, production delays and trouble with police in Hungary, who seized a shipment of the movie's prop guns, which turned out to be real guns. That it finally got made, for \$190 million, with Pitt starring, is a story of zombies ascending to the heights of mainstream culture.

Being faithful to Brooks' epic book would be impossible, as each chapter is basically a treatment for an entire feature. Instead, director Marc Forster (*Quantum of Solace*, *Monster's Ball*) works with only the same overall concept of a worldwide zombie epidemic in which the barest swarms like a bil-

lial plague of insects, and a protagonist travels the globe to hunt down its origins. Pitt plays former U.N. pandemic expert Gerry Lane, who's barely rescued, along with his family, from New Jersey as the virus explodes within hours. He's then recruited for a global mission and heads to the military base in South Korea where the first "zombie" report was logged. Then he travels to Israel, where he learns that the country fortified itself just in time, but now the running, fleeing monsters are breaching the concrete wall, forcing him to narrowly escape (yet again) with an Israeli soldier (Daniella Kertesz) in tow. He eventually winds up in Wales at a disease control centre, which may provide the first step in figuring out a way to save the world.

It's a tense ride and Gerry's dogged determination to see his family again keeps us anchored, even as CGI zombies spill all over the screen. Without the novel's gore and the roster things that humans do to humans, we're spared much of the real horror, though, making *World War Z* closer to a thriller, like Steven Soderbergh's *Contagion*. Regardless, the film brings new ideas to the subgenre, plenty of zombicalypse eye candy and the promise of an epic trilogy (the next part has been given life). There are a few kudos left in the zombie movie tank, but who'd have thought Brad Pitt would be behind the wheel?

DAVE ALEXANDER

## THE HOUSE THAT WAS BUILT

## THE CONJURING

Starring Vera Farmiga, Lili Taylor and Patrick Wilson  
Directed by James Wan  
Written by Chad Hayes and Carey Koeppe  
Warner Bros.

Let's cop to an uncomfortable truth: in the near-hundred-year history of the haunted house movie, nearly every kind of a freak-out has been tried, and the most successful ones have been ripurposed over and over again. Thus, chasing utter originality

in the subgenre is not unlike a heroin addict chasing the dragon – it's an unattainable goal. So the question becomes: "Do the borrowed and reconfigured scenes build enough foreboding to send those delicious icy tendrils of dread up the spine?" In the case of *The Conjuring*, the answer is a resounding yes.

The film, which is based on an actual paranormal investigation led by Ed and Lorraine Warren (played here by insidious Patrick Wilson and Bates Motel's Vera Farmiga), is a 1970s-set period piece. As it opens, we see the lives of two families, the Warrens and the Perrons, set on a collision course.



as the Pernors move into their new rural home and are immediately beset by strange and increasingly malicious occurrences (noises, flying photos, foul unexplainable odors). Near her wit's end, matriarch Carolyn (Julie Taylor) enlists the Warners' help.

They arrive at the house with their taunt, and it doesn't take much for the demonic force inside to get riled up (just a few cameras and religious artifacts, really, and then we're in full-on possession mode). As the paranormal experts attempt to purge the entity, ever more gratuitous ghostly set pieces come into play (including a climax that has several characters literally flung around the farmhouse).

As with *Theodosius*, director James Wan chooses to make his ghosts more solid and gleeful than spectral. He also employs occasional jump scares (including a few cheap ones) while still building dread and suspense extremely effectively in more traditional ways. Like most contemporary cinematic ghost stories, there isn't much new here, but once again Wan proves himself a master manipulator of what's come before. When topped off with a mouthy good, A-list cast, we're provided with a film that may not quite live up to its "scariest movie of the year" tagline, but, if ghost stories are your thing, comes pretty damned close.

BRONXIA S. KURTLETT

## HANG IT UP

### DEAD SOULS

Starring Jesse James, Magda Apenowicz and Bill Moseley  
Directed by Colin Theys  
Written by Jona Deakins  
Shout! Factory

Went religious rituals, self-cannibalism and demonic zombies — reads like a checklist for an all-out schlockfest, doesn't it? Unfortunately, the generically titled *Dead Souls* (based on the book by Michael Caine) takes all of those boxes, but somehow still finds a way to be a seriously stale score flick.

The film centres on eighteen-year-old Johnny Petre (Jesse James) who finds out he's adopted when he inherits his former family's rural home. Deciding to stay and investigate his past, Johnny discovers that a teenage squatter named Emma (Magda Apenowicz) has taken up residence. A will-they-or-won't-they relationship quickly sparks up between the two, and Johnny allows the girl to continue living in the desolate abode. Interrupting the chaste teen romance, however, are the ghosts of Johnny's kin. His score learns from a visit by ex-Shant! Deppford (Bill Moseley) that her religious zealot father literally crucified his family, and himself, in order to obtain eternal life for all of them. Things didn't go exactly as planned, though, partly because Johnny's older brother had him from his homicidal dad. As a result, the family's bitter feud between life and death for eighteen years and thinks that Johnny's crucifixion is the answer to their problem. As the ghosts become more aggressive and begin to possess the bodies of the newly dead, Johnny and Emma must find a way to finally put the evil spirits to rest, before Johnny ends up on the cross.

The total flaw of this film is how seriously it takes itself. Its combination of possession, sorcery, bewitchings and teen romance doesn't exactly merit a score here, and its writer and director are ill-fitted for such a sober project. Having worked together on several Chiller cheese films (such as *Darkness*), *Satanquith Assault* and *Alien Opponent*, their version of a dark supernatural thriller is even cornier than their former fare.

With its silly story and the mindless Moseley in the cast, cranking up this film's crazy factor could have made for some horrific trash, instead of the laughably dull, demonic drama it is.

PHILIP BOLAN

# ABBREVIATED TERRORS

SHORT FILMS REVIEWED

FESTIVAL FEAR Edition

BY PHILIP BOLAN

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### THE GRAVEDIGGER'S TETHER

12 mins

Pach Robinson/USA

When a reanimator escapes her grave to wreak havoc on the cemetery's deceased, it's up to the not-so-well-groundskeeper to save his tether's soul. This Southern-bred horror-comedy serves up a slew of slapstick (as the man clumsily attempts to thwart the *Gravedigger*) and robust reports between the keeper and his undead dad, who reanimates to criticize his son, which recalls the classic comedy of Abbott and Costello and the Three Stooges. With an open-ended twist, this *Grave*-escape romp leaves viewers hungry for more mad-cap mayhem from the father-son monster-slaying duo.



### SRRB

11 mins

Madaly Chavez/Cinco and Shovel! Shovel!/Canada

A young boy is tormented by a delirious, bath-tub-dwelling, hell-eating monster, who appears whenever the kid needs to pee, and a cruel older sister who takes pleasure in her brother's pain. Like a children's storybook adaptation, this creepy short — inspired by one of Guillermo del Toro's childhood nightmares — features typical reactions from a heavily-voiced British mom and some impressively over-the-top suffering. The teeny creature is a mutilated-looking humanoid, whose long, serpentine tongue has its own set of traps, but the boy's abusive older sister, who rips up one of his drawings and shows his mother, is perhaps the more monstrous character. When pushed too far, the boy finds a clever way to let the terror with him alone. It's not a kick film but does bring back memories of the more wicked *Raiders*. **D**oh! **D**oh!



### COVR (G)

14 mins

Neil Cross/Spain

Proximally set in a sinister-looking horror house, this dialogue-free film shows a Finnish family perform a disturbing birthday ritual on an eight-year-old boy, while a rebellious member of the group attempts to stop it. The characters all move in a rhythmically stiff and deliberate manner, while the first-half boards an expressive, dissonant score that would be right at home in a *U2* film. This short has less experience that forces you to witness the strange ceremony, and creates a sense of dread at its unknown outcome. The early results, terrifying soundtrack and dreadful atmosphere give *Cover* a nightmare feel, reminiscent of a *Jean Rollin* picture, whose score





## NIGHT OF THE LIVING ED

### EDDIE: THE SLEEPWALKING CANNIBAL

Starring Thure Lindhardt, Dylan Scott Smith and Stephen Markley  
Directed by Boris Rodriguez  
Written by Boris Rodriguez, Alex Spatsis and Jonathan Reardon  
Coppa (longer) Release

With its odd mix of ghoulish fun and satirical jab at the artistic community and the creative process, *Eddie: The Sleepwalking Cannibal* plays like a

21st-century variation on Roger Corman's *A Bucket of Blood* (1959).

Lars (Thure Lindhardt), a famous artist from Denmark, suffers from "painter's block" and signs on as a teacher at a small art school in Canada (the film is a Canada-Denmark co-production). Lars meets Eddie (Dylan Scott Smith, pictured above), a chadlike, traumatized mule who is allowed to attend classes because his aunt is the school's wealthy patron. When the aunt dies, Lars is coaxed into sharing quarters with the silent, hulking, seemingly homeless Eddie, keeping an eye on him for the good of the school, which will continue to receive financial support from the aunt's estate.

But Eddie is, as troubled as light, in a goddamn, bulimic state; he ventures out into the snow, clad only in his underwear, and lurches about like a zombie, tearing apart and devouring small animals. Lars witnesses the carnage and is inspired to paint his first masterpiece in a decade. To the strains of David Byrne's symphonic score, he's transported into a hallucinogenic world where the addictive rush of painting is all that matters. Lars encourages the flesh-eater's nighttime forays, justifying his Calvin-like control of Eddie's nocturnal activities because the gore stimulates his creative juices.

The tension escalates when Lars has words with an obnoxious neighbour whose barking dog keeps him awake at night, and he subsequently seeds Eddie on a mission to eat the mutt. But Eddie takes his habit to a new level, chewing down on both dog and master. Eventually, Lars becomes an addict to the rush of painting as Eddie is to the taste of human flesh, and the blood flows ever more freely until the film's gruesomely ending denouement.

Director Boris Rodriguez balances comedy and



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horror with the finesse of an old master. The humour is understated in contrast to the viciousness of Eddie's superhuman atrocities, and Rodriguez shoots his scenes in an elegant style that recalls the balanced compositions of Stanley Kubrick. Well worth a taste.

**HARVEY F. CHARTLAND**

## HORNSWOGGLED

### AXE GIANT: THE WRATH OF PAUL BUNYAN

Starring Thomas Downey, Kristina Kopf and Joe Estevez  
Directed by Gary Jones  
Written by Gary Jones, Jeffrey Miller and Jason Aronson  
Wipe Films

As American folklore has it, Paul Bunyan was a giant lumberjack with superhuman strength who created the Grand Canyon by dragging his axe behind him and whose footprints became the Great Lakes. According to *Axe Giant*, the decidedly campy take on the tale by genre B-movie regular Gary Jones, Bunyan was a man born with a rare birth defect that caused him to grow twice as big and live three times as long as the average human being. What the legends don't mention is that Bunyan also had a homicidal temper.

Meanwhile, Minnesota has instituted a first-time offender program in which convicted youth attend a boot camp in the wilderness with dull serpent Hoke (Thomas Downey) and social worker Ms. K (Kristina Kopf). Little do they know, the woods are inhabited by two breeds of menace: the dimwitted neophyte known as Meeko (Joe Estevez) and our giant. When one of the kids finds an axe and takes it as a souvenir, the rubber-faced behemoth comes after them with his axe.

As they flee in a cabin, Meeko explains that the giant had one friend in the world, Babe the Blue Ox, and Bunyan got his first taste of blood when he found some local loggers having a Babe-B-Q. He slaughtered them, and when he was caught he was dragged through town, forced into a mine shaft and blown to smithereens — or

so the townspeople thought he escaped, of course, and lived in mountain solitude until the campers disturbed Babe's shrine. To make matters worse, one of 'em, CS (Jember Connor), bears a striking resemblance to Meeko's great aunt Maybell, a woman Bunyan loved who rejected him.

The film's attempt to construct Bunyan as a tragic monster figure falls about eight feet short of moving, and any pleasure that could be gleaned from seeing the inflicting characters get chopped into human caviar is marred by plot holes (such as Meeko's loyalty to Bunyan), wince-worthy performances (Kopf appears to be suffering from lockjaw) and item-filled CGI (the rendering of Babe is bizarre beyond description). Overall, *Axe Giant* is a dumb movie about an equally dumb legend that should have been left on the chopping block.

**ANDREA SUBASSATI**



## OVERLOOKED, FORGOTTEN AND DISMISSED

THIS ISSUE: LANCE GETS TROMATIZED

AS THE NORM TURNS

### ATTACK OF THE TROMAGGOT

Thomas Entertainment

Not content with plundering the depths of the independent American film market, Thomas also invaded Germany to make its cinematic fifth. The result is two of the three films in this month's column. We may have taught the Germans in a couple of ways, but they've been pretty firmly overruled, and they make great cars and even better beer. But they don't always make great C-movies — not even great bad ones. This mess is a heavily dubbed inventory about a monster midget stalking the savages of some backwater town policed by transvestite cops and

terrorist cells. The storyline is near impossible to follow, because it was filmed over a long period of time, so the actors, weather and locations frequently change. Not even a cameo from screen queen Debbie Rochon can save this schlock!

**BODY COUNT:** 19

**BEST DEATH:** Monster midget and attack.



**TC**

MUST BE TRIPPIN'

### THE SECRET OF THE MAGIC MUSHROOMS

Thomas Entertainment

In 1993, Public Enemy released the song "Don't Believe the Hype." I'm reminded of this because it completely sums up this sucker, which has been called "the Lord of the Rings of the no-budget movie." It takes place deep in the schlockworld, where two punks are spending the night campy and drinking. When one of them dies, the other decides to go on a quest to find some magic mushrooms that might help bring his friend back to life. Along the way he meets a hapless hippie, a schizophrenic soldier, a malicious midget, a cannibalistic farmer and a talking, rape tree. As brutal as that sounds, it's not half as horrible as the outer trauma you're in for. Honestly, where's Terminator X when you need him?

**BODY COUNT:** 3

**BEST DEATH:** Liquor bottle head smash.



**TC**

GORILLA WELFARE

### TEEN APE VS. THE MONSTER NAZI APOCALYPSE

Thomas Entertainment

Over the years I've avoided collecting you, dear reader, to the juvenile antics of Chris Seward's Teen Ape movies. Unfortunately that streak ends with this, the latest in the series of low-budget fascos he apparently likes as belated sister offerings such as *Terror at Blood Fist Lake* and *Spit Chew or Hair Stone*. Possibly moved as an homage up off the Mulvey movies, this effort sets out the back story of Teen Ape. He's captured by the Nazis and stolen by the F.B.I. (Prosecutorial Investigation Agency), which uses him to defeat a renegade Adolf Hitler and his Nazi followers. The acting is cardboard, the fight scenes are disjoint, the humour (on the toilet) and the costumes are filling space. Someone put this old sinner to sleep once and for all.

**BODY COUNT:** 34

**BEST DEATH:** Suffocation by seal entrapment.



**TC**



**TC**

LAST CHANCE LANCE

## REISSUES



## GOMPIN' AIN'T EASY

CASTLE FREAK (1995) *Blu-ray*

Starring Jeffrey Combs, Barbara Crampton  
and Jonathan Fuller  
Directed by Stuart Gordon  
Written by Benicio Poole and Stuart Gordon  
Palm Moon

Need a reminder that, no matter how dysfunctional your family might be, things could always be far worse? If so, Stuart Gordon's *Castle Freak* — a sordid study of grief, redemption and the destructive familial covenants that bind us — may be just the festering tonic.

John Reilly (Jeffrey Combs), a recovering alcoholic, arrives in Italy with his family to finalize the sale of the medieval castle he has inherited from the late Duchess D'Orsino (Helen Shiring). As they wait to liquidate the estate, John attempts to reconcile with his estranged wife, Susan (Barbara Crampton), who refuses to forgive him for the car accident that claimed the life of their son (Sebastian Satta) and blinded their daughter (Jessica DeLoraine). Unbeknownst to the family,

they share their decaying lodgings with the Duchess' insane and grotesquely disfigured son, Giorgio (Jonathan Fuller). After chewing his own thumb off to escape the dungeon shackles that have confined him for 40 years, Giorgio begins wandering the castle.

Derived from H.P. Lovecraft's short story "The Outsider," *Castle Freak* often feels far removed from its inspiration. Only occasionally frightening, and afflicted

by a sick pace, this sparse shocker nonetheless benefits from its atmospheric gothic locale. Crampton delivers perhaps a career-best performance as the long-suffering wife and receives dependable support from Combs as her guilt-ridden spouse. However, it's Fuller's portrayal of the titular freak — a wretched creature whose tongue and genitalia have been removed by his crazed mother — that most impresses. Covered from head to toe in makeup appliances, he skillfully conveys both an animalistic ferocity and child-like grace that veers alternately from the per-



verse to the poignant.

varse to the poignant.

*Castle Freak* debuts on Blu-ray in a remastered HD transfer with 5.1 surround sound that is a noticeable improvement over the shaggy and colour of Full Moon's previous DVD release. Supplements include a new "Castle Speak" interview with Gordon, the original Videotape "Making of" featurette and "lost" interviews with the director, Combs and Crampton conducted by the inimitable William Stebbins (yes, Captain Kirk himself).

Although it fails to quicken the pulse as emphatically as *Re-Animator*, fans are advised to get their *Freak* on and savour one of Gordon's most grimly satisfying achievements.

MICHAEL DOYLE

## GROUNDWORK

SOFT FOR DIGGING (2001) *Digital*

Starring Edward Mosca, Sarah Legrand  
and Andrew Hewitt  
Written and directed by J.T. Petty  
VHS

I'll admit it's odd to call something as unassuming and underseen as J.T. Petty's *Soft for Digging* a "cult movie," but since it first appeared more than a decade ago, it's fostered a kind of conspiratorial bond among its admirers: they know there's something special about the film even if others can't quite figure it out. Indeed, *Soft for Digging's* capacity for dividing audiences is evident in its 71/48 percent critics/public split on Rotten Tomatoes.



While I don't agree with its detractors, I can certainly see where they're coming from. On the surface, the film presents a perhaps too-straightforward paranormal mystery, with the her-

ald-like Virgil (Edward Mosca) witnessing a murder, trying to convince others of the truth of what he's seen, and eventually being caught into direct action by the spirit of the victim. In the context of Virgil's isolated rural existence, this spirit, appearing in dreams and visions, almost qualifies as a friend; our protagonist's other companions are a cat and, um, bees. Supporting human characters include a male bicyclist who's afraid of him and a couple of cops, one of whom feels Virgil belongs in a retirement home instead of wasting everybody's time by insisting they search for an apparently non-existent corpse. The music, composed by writer/director Petty himself, matches the animation of the wintry forest setting, and the visual effects, such as they are, are mostly achieved via jerky-jerky montage.

Yet it's the very austerity of this no-budget



production that impresses, with Petty consciously, and thoughtfully, following the conventions of silent film right down to the intertitles that introduce each chapter ("A brief encounter with a strange couple; the occurrence of a horrible thing"). Every shot brims at important truths regarding theme and character, and every facial expression conveys two or three feelings beneath the first layer. For these reasons, and how, as a result, it shows us just how haunted the everyday world can be. *Salt* for Digging deserves to be considered a masterpiece of quiet horror. Since Petty recently regained the rights to the film and is now selling it for \$5 as a download at [safforddigging.com](http://safforddigging.com), you can decide for yourself.

PETER GUTIERREZ

## LIKE FATHER, LIKE SLAUGHTER

### HANDS OF THE RIPPER (1971) Blu-ray/DVD

Starring Eric Porter, Angered Film and Jane Marrow  
Directed by Peter Searcy  
Written by L.W. Swenson  
Synopsis

Jack the Ripper has been a frequent figure in cinema since early appearances in silent classics such as *Woozovka* (1924) and *The Lodger* (1926). Hammer first visited the Whitechapel murders in 1949 with the serviceable *Rover to Let*, but it wasn't until *Hands of the Ripper* that the company really got its mitts wet.

Helmed by Hungerford-born director Peter Searcy, it centres on the efforts of Freudian psychiatrist Dr. Pritchard (Eric Porter) to cure the murderous compulsions of Anna (Angered Rees), a damaged young woman who, as an infant, witnessed her father—the Ripper himself—kill her mother. Since then, every time Anna is kissed in proximity to shimmering light she enters a homicidal, trance-like state. After covering up for a spate of brutal murders committed by his delicate patient, Pritchard is gravely injured whilst attempting to rehabilitate Anna, leading to a final, tragic confrontation at St. Paul's Cathedral.

A supernatural psycho-sexual thriller with supernatural overtones, *Ripper* was dismissed by critics as a morbid twist on Pygmalion. It's actually more closely related to *Dracula's Daughter* (1936) and *Peeping Tom* (1960) in its exploration of sexual violence and the sins of the father being wrought upon the children. Elevated by a thoughtful script, decorous period detail and a lush score, Searcy's third and final picture for

Hammer is arguably the company's bloodiest production. One of Anna's victims is gruesomely skewered by a poker, whilst another has an eye gouged with a hatpin. In what must be a first, a third injured party attempts to extricate the sword he has been impaled on using a door handle. *Duché!*

A welcome entry in Synapse's Hammer Collection, this Blu-ray/DVD combo boasts a remastered and uncut HD print that remakes sixteen scenes of violence (banned by the MPAA from *Ripper*'s theatrical release). Picture quality is nicely detailed for a film of this vintage and supplements include an interesting lobbycard titled *The Devil's Bloody Plaything*, a motion still gallery that exhibits the evolution of gore in Hammer movies, a television intro, trailer, TV spots and more.

Perhaps the last masterpiece from an ailing studio, *Ripper* is a rich and fascinating film that is probably a lot better than you remember.

MICHAEL DOYLE



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WE ASK THE DIRECTOR OF '70s CULT ODDITY **TOURIST TRAP**  
TO RE-OPEN HIS SURREAL ROADSIDE HORROR SHOW

# MANNEQUINS ALIVE!

BY TYLER DOUPE

ONE OF THE STRANGEST FILMS TO DROP AT THE END OF THE '70s, DAVID SCHMOELLER'S **TOURIST TRAP** IS ALSO A TOTAL CREEP-OUT FOR ANYONE WITH A FEAR OF MANNEQUINS.

It stars former Hollywood leading man Chuck Connors (TV western *The Rifleman*) as Stausen, the proprietor of a dilapidated roadside attraction. When a group of young people seek help with a flat tire, they discover the place is actually a chamber of horrors as they're harried, attacked and tortured by both Stausen and some telekinetically controlled mannequins; some are even turned into grotesque living dolls. The deliriously unnerving film was just as released by Full Moon Pictures, so we asked Schmoeller (who also directed *Countspace* and the first *Puppetmaster* movie) for a walkthrough of his 1979 *Tourist Trap*.

*The late '70s were a great period for horror movies. How did Tourist Trap come about?*

While I was making my thesis film, *Tobe Hooper* was making *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. It was a huge success and launched his career. So, I decided to make a horror film. I had the idea of using the concept that had been successful in my thesis film — [It was] called *The Spider Man K&N*. It's a 30-minute short about a blind man who lives in the attic above a theatre. There's a storage room that's next to where he is staying that's full of mannequins. He has taken a couple of those mannequins and dressed them up — one mannequin was his father, and one mannequin was his mother. He would talk to them.

*Tourist Trap* is exceptionally creepy and bizarre, especially when the mannequins come to life; where does that aesthetic stem from?

In terms of my early literary background, I started as a writer in high school. I spent some time in Mexico. I even did my first year of college in Mexico City. Magical realism, which is sort of an aspect of South American writing and a sister of surrealism, is something I was particularly fond of. The other thing is, the tone of a film usually comes from the personality of the director. It's not like I'm a creepy person or anything, I'm a pretty normal person, but I'm quiet and thoughtful and that translates to my work.

*Chuck Connors was a mainstream star at the time. How did you get him to play the heavy in a low-budget horror movie?*

He didn't seem to like what we had in mind, but as it turned out, he was at a point in his career where he wanted to become the next *Burt Reynolds* and create a new career for himself making horror films. He didn't live long enough to do that, but that was his plan. He worked really hard and was very invested in the film, which was very important.

*What was the shoot itself like? Was everyone on board with such a strange movie?*

We had 24 days. We shot it on film. I also had a really good production designer, Bob Burns. We were all pretty young, but I had talented people working for me. Everything Burns was able to come up with, using so little money, had a big influence on the movie.

*Getting Pino Dinaggio to score the film was a coup. Tell us about his involvement.*

We got really, really lucky. I got a phone call from Joe Dante when he was making *Phreaky*. I don't remember how it came about, but he needed a translator. Pino didn't speak English. I spoke Spanish and so did Pino. So, I set down with Joe and Pino as a translator when they were working on *Phreaky*. That's how I met Pino. His fee was \$50,000 and our whole budget was \$300,000. Our executive producer, Charlie [Band], agreed to pay the fee and Pino did our score.

*How was he to collaborate with?*

We showed Pino the film in a screening room. We started at the very beginning and went through scene by scene. He was very experienced doing film scores and I had never scored a film, so I let him lead. He would provide his recommendations and I would suggest the clearest or the mood that I wanted. In terms of what he came up with, though, that was all Pino. I would suggest a cue here or a cue there and he would say "yes" or "no." It took us a couple of days to map it out and then he went back to Italy. He recorded it in Rome. ☐



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# THE LATE-NITE ARCHIVE

FILM

*Sing a Song of Murder*

by Paul Corio

**A** notable ancestor of the slasher subgenre, *Rene Clair's And Then There Were None* (1945) did much more for horror than just add a ready-made body count and cryptic killers. This atmospheric Agatha Christie adaptation, which makes its Blu-ray debut this month courtesy of VCI Entertainment, remains a surprisingly grisly and Gothic tale, taking its murder cues from a 19th-century British nursery rhyme about the misfortunes that befall a dwindling tribe of Indian boys. An influence on everything from *House on Haunted Hill* (1959) to *The Abominable Dr. Phibes* (1971) and *Bay of Blood* (1971), *And Then There Were None* has, among its most notable features, a fascinating soundtrack that mixes the creepy power of children's songs in a way that continues to inspire horror movies to this day.

In the film, ten strangers arrive at a spooky estate on a remote island. As they get acquainted, they each reveal that they've never met their host, a certain Mr. W. Owen. That evening, the butler (Richard Haydn) puts on a record in which Owen accuses each guest of getting away with a murder and promises that justice will be served. Almost immediately, the guests begin to be killed, one by one, by their mysterious host in methods outlined in the nursery rhyme "Ten Little Indians." First, Prince Stavoff (Mischa Auer) is poisoned ("One choked his little self"), then the butler is butchered in the woodshed ("One chopped herb- and in halves"), and a secretary (June Duprez) is stabbed with a hypodermic needle ("A bum-ba-bee slung one"). After each death, another figure of an Indian boy mysteriously vanishes from the dining table centerpiece. As des-



cent against a crackling thunderstorm, composer Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco's score for the film diverges from most horror films of the 1950s and '40s, which relied largely on familiar classical pieces and stirring orchestral arrangements (or, on poverty row, cheaply licensed stock music). Rather than simply tying chilling musical themes to individual characters — a rather difficult feat with so many suspects — Castelnuovo-Tedesco bases the whole score around the "Ten Little Indians" song.

It's this strong musical motif that sets it apart from similar works. After an embellished orchestral version of the song plays over the opening credits, Clair works quickly to establish the "Ten Little Indians" theme both as part of the musical score, as well as diegetically. After seeing the Indian figures early on, characters recite the lyrics around the dinner table and, shortly after, Prince Stavoff finds sheet music in the drawing room and crudely tape out the song on piano for the other guests.

Unlike the grand scores often afforded to horror films, Castelnuovo-Tedesco uses the simplistic series of notes to reiterate and support the prob-

ise of the film throughout. It's particularly memorable because of the way it plays off the tension between the innocent ways kids sing songs compared to the often gruesome content. These silly chants and rhymes, repeated during schoolyard games, take on new meanings when contextualized within the genre. Sometimes they're well-known classics, such as in the film version of *The Shining* (1980) when Jack Nicholson recites "The Three Little Pigs" as he smashes the bathroom door, while others are composed especially for the work at hand, such as "O Willow Weep" in *The Innocents* (1961), and, perhaps most famously, the "Reddy's coming for you" chant that appears throughout the *Nightmare on Elm Street* series.

Few horror film soundtracks, however, are as committed to this idea as *And Then There Were None*, which never misses a chance to rework variations on the original theme into the proceedings, constantly emphasizing the underlying creepiness of this otherwise innocuous piece of music. Combined with French auteur Clair's strong visual sense (and the script's touches of black humor), the use of music as a frightening long-shadow of impending death makes *And Then There Were None* amongst the most successful marriages of terror and mystery tropes ever attempted, and an essential classic for horror connoisseurs. **B**

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# CAME FROM BOWEN'S BASEMENT



## DRIVE-INS, DELETE BINS AND OTHER SINS

### Boo Bayou

by John W. Bowen

Ever hear of a film and tell yourself, "So it, we really need to see this," but then you put it off for years?—Maybe even decades? It's happened to me more than once, and that list of films included, until recently, *The Alligator People* (1959), which I first became aware of while perusing *Famous Monsters of Filmland* back in my teens. Upon finally getting around to it during my mid-life meltdown (which has been going on since some time in my twenties), I'm generally positive about this experience, although my feelings are a tad mixed—so I thought I'd pass them on to you.

References to the film as Uncle Furry Ackerman's vulnerable may never really get all that specific about the plot. Truthfully, I was kinda hoping for a small town being overrun by gator preps, culminating in a climactic brawl with a ragtag band of local residents who save the day, but that's not really the case. Maybe a race of hyper-intelligent aliens in L-cloth shirts? Nope. Thinking back to these *FM* issues, I mainly just recall skills of some guy in a scaly getup from the west up and standard human-issue pants, which even back then I suspected was a cost-cutting measure. So what did I get when I finally sat down with this cheapie and a bag of No-Name Sour Cream 'N' Sauce Pork Rinds? Crazy-as-mash-up-of-50-s and science and Southern Gothic mad-drama, that's what, and then a bit more Tennessee Williams by way of Ed Wood? Yeah, you're about halfway there.

Beverly Garland and Richard Crane play Joyce and Paul, a couple whose wedding night train trip gets harshed when Paul receives a myste-

nous telegram that prompts him to jump off at the next stop without explanation and disappear. Months go by before Joyce tracks Paul to his last known whereabouts, a big ol' ramblin' shambles of a rector house deep in Louisiana swampland country. First bad omen: she's greeted at the train station by a crazed, lecherous Cajun handy-

man named Marion (Jon Chaney Jr.). Did I say handy-man? Well, about 50 percent less handy these days, since one of said hands is now a hook, thanks to the local lizards, hence his endless tangents about gator hate! and penchant for shooting them or running them over with his pickup truck at every available opportunity. Second bad omen: upon arriving at the manor, backwoods dowager Mrs. Lavonia Hawthorne (Frieda Inescort) is about as frosty to Joyce as

King Diamond greeting a Jehovah's Witness, brushing her off, refusing to answer any questions and insisting she vacate the premises until she learns there's no threat until the next morning, at which point Mrs. Hawthorne offers accommo-

dation for the night be the condition that Joyce does not leave the bedroom for any reason. All of the above goes down while Mrs. Hawthorne and the servants exchange worried—and highly conspicuous—glances, and before long Joyce is able to pry two small but significant pieces of info out of Lavonia the maid: "Ma Hawthorne, she deal with the evil one" and "This is a trouble-house—big, deep trouble."

Before long, Marion is blasting it up in the front yard, drunkenly shooting at alligators, and our beleaguered heroine decides she's had enough. Busting loose of her quarters, she soon learns that a) Mrs. Hawthorne is actually Paul's mom, b) Paul is in a nearby lab where Dr. Sinclair (George Macready) is performing experiments in human/alligator splicing (via a mystical ray) that may or may not save lives, and any further explanation would likely result in spoils. Suffice to say, a good time is had by all! Well, except for the people onscreen, none of whom make out too well.

*The Alligator People* is still relatively easy to find both online and in soon-to-be-quaint old digital format, so treat yourself! In the meantime, maybe you should get the hell out of my basement—at the gator talk's get me a-hankerr! for new shoes and a matching handbag, and you two-legged lizards are lookin' ripe for harvest.



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# BLOOD IN FOUR COLOURS

by PIERO CARZUELO

Victor Hugo's 1899 novel *The Man Who Laughs* may not be as well known as the author's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*, but its contributions to the horror genre are just as notable. The story of Gwynplaine, a man viciously mutilated as a young boy, his face forever distorted into a horrific grin, has left its mark on characters such as William Castle's Mr. Sardonicus and, most famously, Batman's arch-enemy, the Joker.

Yet despite its influence, few people are familiar with Hugo's original work or its many adaptations, including the classic 1928 film starring Conrad Veidt (the acknowledged visual inspiration for the Joker). Now, a new graphic novel adaptation written by David Hine and drawn by Mark Stafford, is hoping to give Hugo's tale the exposure it deserves.

"I was enthralled by the story," admits Hine. "I'm a big fan of gothic horror and this book has all the elements of the genre: it's the perfect blend of horror, romance and melodrama. There are a number of scenes that immediately leaped out as perfect comic book visuals."

Some of the book's most striking imagery – chillingly recreated for the graphic novel – include the young boy Gwynplaine wandering through the snow, finding first a hanged man rotting on the gibbet, then a woman frozen to death with her baby clinging to her breast, the villainous Cornprossius, who make their living by mutilating and castrating children, the revelation of Gwynplaine's grotesquely mangled face, and the bewails of Southwark prison where Gwynplaine is reunited with the doctor who disfigured him and is privy to his brutal torture.

"There are so many absolutely classic scenes of horror, but there is also a moving love story and a brilliant political thriller with unmissable twists," says Hine. "I've never come across a

story before that absolutely demanded to be adapted into a comic."

Like many novels from the time, Hugo's work refuses to be rigidly categorized into one specific genre and the book is as notable for its political commentary as it is for its horrific imagery. Gwynplaine, who has been making a humble but happy living as a travelling performer, visits London and is identified as the long lost son of a British lord and soon has his life renebrated. He is then witness to the horrific disparity between the aristocracy and the British people.

"I was struck by how opposite the politics were and I was careful to include and underline the aspects that reflected on the inequalities of British society, the permissive nature of royalty, the covert use of torture and all the other elements that Victor Hugo would be horrified to see are still relevant today."

Despite the heavy political subtext, Hine and artist Stafford never lost sight of the story's horror aspects; in fact, the creators found it quite easy to focus on them.

"I didn't want anything that isn't in the book," asserts Hine. "What I did do was cut a lot of the more gothic or banal elements, so that the debilitated version probably appears more focused on the horror. Some of the grotesqueness is due to Mark's drawing style. He has a fabulously warped style of caricature that comes from his background in black humour and cartooning."

Indeed, Stafford's artwork is a highlight, perfectly capturing the macabre elements of Hugo's book and making even the most mundane set-



*The Man Who Laughs: Victor Hugo's classic gets reinvented with a particularly gruesome adaptation*

tings – such as a typical London street – seem twisted and menacing.

"The only real input I had to the actual style of drawing was to push Mark a little more on the extreme nature of Gwynplaine's disfigurement. Hugo didn't pull any punches in his own description of Gwynplaine's tortured features and he did it for a very good reason: It's important that the face is almost too awful to look at. It symbolizes the abusive treatment of the people of Britain by those in power, and this is a very angry book. It had to be shocking."

*The Man Who Laughs* is currently out in the UK and will be released in North America next year. For more information visit [selfmadehero.com](http://selfmadehero.com)

FOLLOW PIERO ON TWITTER @PCARZUELO





From the creator of *World War Z* comes *The Extinction Parade*, a new comic featuring zombies versus those other undead icons, the vampires. Unimagined zombie outbreaks have been reported all over the world. A group of three vampires decide to check out a recent flare-up in Australia and find themselves in the middle of a battlefield, the first round of what is sure to be an all-out undead war. The story is narrated by a female bloodsucker, one of the two, who does a good job of filling us in on the roles the two undead races play in the world and how humans tend to be victimized by both. It's the typical exposition dump laced up tremendously by some great gore art from Raulo Caçeres. This being an Avatar book, the blood flows freely and copiously and Caçeres is clearly relishing the opportunity to draw some carnage. Zombie lovers will find much to appreciate in *Issue 1*, including a cool double-page spread that's heavy on the mayhem. We'll see if the story is able to match the visual delirium.



**Baltimore, the vampire hunter**, appears for only two pages in this latest one-shot. Instead, the bulk of the story is dedicated to introducing what will hopefully be a recurring antagonist: the inquisitor. This issue gives us the background of Dwee, an orphan who is taken under the wing of a priest determined to cleanse the world of evil. Or in this case the vampire cements Baltimore himself his often-faced Dwee eventually becomes a priest and leader of a religious inquisition to rid the world not only of the creatures but also those he believes have been tainted by their evil. His next target: Baltimore. Dwee looks to be a worthy adversary, thanks to a strong origin story by Mike Mignola and Christopher Golden rife with dramatic potential, and some nice art by Ben Stenbeck. Look forward to the eventual clash.



as a Golem will be birthed to help the villagers persevere. Though the first issue of *Breath of Bones*, *A Tale of the Golem* is light on monster action, it sets up the series nicely, introducing us to the young Noah and his grandfather. Through their relationship, and their interactions with a wounded Allied pilot, we learn of the impending threats and the desperate actions they must take. Steve Niles' script is lean and straightforward, presenting the moral dilemma in a mature and sympathetic fashion. The art, likewise, conveys the turmoil of the characters imply while hinting at what's to come. It's a solid foundation for the upcoming monster mayhem.

**I confess** I have a thing for apes with guns, so *Six-Gun Gorilla* was a no-brainer, really. Thankfully, it's a really fun ride with some strong visu-



al and creepy horror undertones. Set in the 22nd century, a number of young men and women find themselves on a barren planet fighting a brutal civil war, while back on Earth a desensitized population views their experiences through a live feed. Thrown in among the carnage are giant tortoises, killer bulls, an obviously psychotic as-

**At the dawn** of the Second World War, a small European – and predominantly Jewish – village is bracing itself for the inevitable Nazi invasion. And while the creatures doesn't make an appearance just yet, it's obvi-

ously and, of course, our apogamous ape. Exactly how everything fits together is yet to be seen but there is some magnificent and bizarre imagery that propels the story forward. Combine this with meaningful left-war satire and you have a comic that delivers viscerally and intellectually.

**Marine biologist Lee Archer** is enlisted by the Department of Homeland Security to investigate some strange poisons at an underwater eddy in the Arctic Circle. Soon, Leo does her thermal underwear and is immersed in an ominous, life-threatening situation involving a creature that has its roots in the prehistoric past and is somehow connected to an apocalyptic future. Writer Scott Snyder (*American Vampire*) is fantastic at setting up a story, both in terms of context and tone, and does so effortlessly in *The Wake*. Characters are introduced at an even pace and the threat is slowly unveiled with enough mystery and intrigue to keep the reader guessing. Sean Murphy's art adds a nice edge to the tale and I'm looking forward to seeing what he does with the undoubtedly gruesome contents yet to come.



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## FERVID FILMMAKING: 66 CULT PICTURES OF VISION, VERVE AND NO SELF-RESTRAINT

Mike Watt  
McFarland

With so many genre film companions available it can be hard to find one actually worthy of a read. Luckily, *Fervid Filmmaking* doesn't disappoint. When it comes to "kitchen sink" films—movies that contain all kinds of seemingly unrelated set pieces and characters, and sometimes even bridge multiple genres—people are often dismissive. The very idea of throwing "everything but the kitchen sink" into a film gives the impression that the story hasn't been well thought out and, as such, these films are often overlooked by the mainstream, as well as extremely misunderstood by a lot of moviegoers. Some of their writers and directors have even been known to snub their own projects and ideas because they became so downright weird.

Watt's glorious new book investigates this corner of filmmaking, literally giving credit where it is deserved and offering insight on a handful of great films such as *Je T'aime, je t'aime* (about a suicidal man coaxed into becoming a test subject) and the ultra-violent underworld caper *Dirty Harry*, both of which have a helluva lot of genre hijinks going on in them. He also writes about more obscure films—including *Apocalypse*, *The Boredyard*, *I Sell the Dead* and *Psyches in Love*—explaining just what makes them so odd and important. While dispensing standard nuts 'n' bolts info, such as facts on the cast and crew, set information and character details, Watt champions a realm of filmmaking that will not only have readers seeking out these rare gems, but may also encourage them to re-evaluate their on-filing practices.

The book also features Watt's personal CliffsNotes for each movie, wherein he reminds us that every once in a while, it is okay to stop and see what a perfect vision a film can be, even when everything but the kitchen sink is used. *Fervid Filmmaking* proves itself to be one of the

more intriguing film companions you're likely to come across.

VANESSA FURTADO

## HAUNTINGS

Ellen Gellow, ed  
Tachyon

Award-winning horror editor Ellen Gellow offers readers a skillfully crafted, captivating collection with *Hauntings*, an anthology of twenty-four spirited ghostly tales from the last 25 years of horror literature. Well-known authors Joyce Carol Oates, Neil Gaiman, Caitlin R. Kiernan, Peter Straub and P. G. Love all contribute stories, which range from creepy and psychological to gut-wrenchingly terrifying.

Gellow explains in her introduction that human preoccupation with death and the past has spawned a lengthy tradition of ghost stories, dating all the way back to Homer. Not only are we haunted by ghosts, just as the protagonists are in many of the tales in this collection, we are also haunted by the memories that are attached to them. This is borne out in stories such as Lucius Shepard's "Delta Sky Honey," which is told from the perspective of a Vietnam veteran who, while on corpse-removal duty, receives a radio signal calling him to join a phantom private, and in Elizabeth Hand's tale "The Have-Nots," about a woman searching for her estranged daughter. The latter yarn takes the unusual (and surprisingly not detrimental) approach of being narrated by a cosmetics saleswoman, who is recounting it as a ghost story at a social gathering.

While obsession with death and the past are the central themes here, as Gellow also points out, many of the tales involve children, memories from childhood or the loss of innocence. Delia Bailey's "Hunger: A Confession" is told from the perspective of a young boy as his older brother tor-

ments him with stories of the cannibal. Mad Dog Mueller, and E. Michael Lewis' "Cargo" sees a man in the Military Air Command describe his experience transporting coffins, many of them containing the child victims of a mass suicide.

While the stories blend cohesively as a collection, some stray from the theme. Neil Gaiman's "Closing Time," for instance, delves more into feelings of being haunted by the past as opposed to actual specters, yet it still feels as if it belongs alongside the other tales in this well-rounded book.

While serious horror fiction aficionados likely already own the included stories in other printings and/or collections, *Hauntings* would serve as an excellent introduction to supernatural fiction for the uninitiated.

JESSA SOBCEK

## PETER CUSHING: A LIFE IN FILM

David Miller  
Titan Books

Peter Cushing—the actor who battled Count Dracula, the Mummy and the Daleks, brought stitched-together corpses to life, was himself resurrected as a revenge-seeking zombie, and gave orders to Darth Vader—was born 100 years ago this past May. His centennial has been marked with the release of several books. Following *Peter Cushing: The Complete Memoirs* (RMP133), which regains his two autobiographies, and *The Peter Cushing Scrapbook*, a collection of the actor's watercolor paintings and drawings, comes *Peter Cushing: A Life in Film*, which serves as both a biography and a film guide to the genre icon's work.

In this updated and expanded edition of the 2000 release, *The Peter Cushing Companion*, author David Miller presents a chronological overview of the actor's career, which began with work in British repertory theatre, then, after he relocated to the United States, small roles in Hollywood films alongside stars such as Carol Lombard and comedy duo Laurel and Hardy. A move back to WWI-era England led to more stage and film





*Peter Cushing: A Life in Film: The actor in 1963's The Evil Frankenstein*

work, and projects that saw him collaborating with the likes of Sir Laurence Olivier. It was in television, however, that he would really begin to cultivate a name for himself, appearing in such highly regarded productions as the 1954 BBC adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

An announcement that a small, independent studio, Hammer Films, was mounting a new adaptation of *Frankenstein* piqued his interest and the resulting hit, *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957), in which he plays cruel scientist Baron Frankenstein, led to roles in the company's other productions, most famously that of vampire slayer Professor Van Helsing in several *Dracula* films featuring Christopher Lee. Other characters the actor portrayed include

## THE GRIM READER



### THE FREEDOM CONNECTION

**William Friedman**

*Harper*

This honest (and juicy) autobiography of the great American director divides one-fifth of its 500 pages to a reiteration of his oeuvre – and of the horror genre. The book is a highly entertaining read, with plenty of details that provide a better understanding of the birth and

evolution of this masterpiece and the colourful career that preceded it.

*DEAN CAULFIELD*



### RYE FOR A FRANKENSTEIN

**Paul McGeehan and Greg Sarnett**

*Wishart Publishing*

Addressing a minor plot hole in 1942's *The Ghost of Frankenstein*, this humorous novella sees mad lab assistant Igor enlist the services of a tailor to create a new suit for his lumbering companion, the Renegade Monster, to replace the one worn by the creature when he fell into a sulphur pit. Spiced, pun-filled prose and surprise appearances by other Universal characters make this a quick, fun read.

*JAMES BOWEN*

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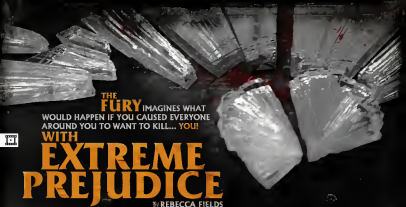
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# EXTREME PREJUDICE

By REBECCA FIELDS

**I F YOU THINK OF CHILDHOOD AS A CAREFREE TIME OF SECURITY AND CONTENTMENT, YOU'RE PROBABLY REMEMBERING IT WRONG.**

We spend the better part of two decades entirely at the mercy of others, trying to figure out what our place in the world might be—or, for that matter, if we even have one. It's that sense of isolation and insecurity that feeds *The Fury*, the new novel from UK-based writer Alexander Gordon Smith.

Well, that and zombies.

"Zombies are my absolute favorite horror creatures," says Smith, who has already built an enthusiastic fan base among teen readers with his five-book *Escape from Avarice* series, set in a horrific underground prison for children. "I love the question of what happens to you when you become a zombie, what happens to your personality, your soul. And I just plain love the fact that they tear you to pieces! I've wanted to write a zombie book for ages, but couldn't find a unique spin on it. I was thinking about the things that trigger zombies—chemicals, possession, viruses—and then suddenly wondered, what if the thing that turned people into zombies was you?"

While there aren't any traditional killers in *The Fury* (but now from Farris, Struss and Green), the spirit of the skidbag presides throughout Smith's tale of three kids who suddenly find themselves at bloody odds with the entire human race. For reasons that aren't explained until late in the story, eighteen-year-old Cal, seventeen-year-old Brick and twelve-year-old Daisy begin to trigger a bizarre reaction in everyone they meet, where the kids are present, everyone nearby—family, friends and strangers alike—wants them dead. *The Fury*'s monsters aren't mythical creatures or cunning psychopaths; they're ordinary people. Nor are there any love triangles here. It's all about survival.

The three manage to fight their way through the bloodthirsty hordes (who go back to their everyday lives when their young targets have escaped or been killed), eventually finding others who suffer from the same terrible affliction. But then, true to the story's zombie roots, some of the survivors also

begin to change.

While it can trace its lineage back to classic horror films, *The Fury* really began in gym class.

"I was bad at sports—all sports—and our class had a really athletic gym teacher who would make us play a game called Murderball," Smith remembers. "He would give you a rugby ball and a five-second head start, then he would send every single person in the class after you. As soon as they caught you they would pile on top of you, punching, kicking, biting and strangling. The weird thing was that all my friends were in the same gym class, but during

the game they became feral, savage—there was nothing in their expressions but the desire to hunt and kill, there was nothing human there anymore."

If you're tempted to think of young adult horror as a watered-down version of its adult counterpart, don't. Smoggy and gore are slashed about by the buckshot in *The Fury*, which opens with a boy being attacked and brutally slain by his family on his fifteenth birthday. And while zombies might not hold the same metaphorical appeal for teen readers as they do for grown-ups, that doesn't make them any less terrifying.

"In some ways, children are easier to scare than adults," notes Smith. "They don't have the same sense of security and confidence that comes with experience so [they] will react differently to frightening events in fiction."

It's not simply that *The Fury* makes kids an ideal audience for horror stories, though. Smith thinks that, in some ways, kids might ultimately find horror even more identifiable—and cathartic—than adults do.

"The imagination required for survival, both physical and emotional, is hardwired into them," he points out. "We lose so much of our imagination as we get older—school and work bludgeon it out of us—so we are less equipped to deal with the scenarios presented in a horror book or movie. Teenagers who read, and who read horror, keep their imaginations open. They allow themselves to believe, and they become better prepared to deal with real life. What is horror if not the idea that anything is possible?"

## THE FURY

by ALEXANDER GORDON SMITH

TEENAGE OF THE YEAR, BESTSELLING THRILLER,  
THE SUNDAY TIMES BEST YOUNG ADULTS BOOK

DAVID MILLER

WRITER &amp; EDITOR

A Life in Film

PETER CUSHING

Sherlock Holmes, Doctor Who (for a pair of '60s feature films), and the sinister Grand Moff Tarkin in the original *Star Wars* (1977). He also had parts in several portmanteau productions from chef Hammer rival Amicus.

Though it doesn't go as in-depth into Cushing's personal life as the actor's own memoirs, Miller manages to present a well-fleshed-out portrait of a man who took his work seriously and always strove to inject a level of believability into even the most outlandish of roles. More surprising is the revelation of Cushing's struggles with depression and that, on more than one occasion, the actor considered committing suicide, particularly after the death of his beloved wife Helen in 1971.

Excerpts from Cushing's memoirs are peppered throughout the book, as are interview comments from friends and co-stars. Miller also includes a chronology of all known Cushing stage, radio, television and film appearances, and a foreword by actress Veronica Carlson. The inclusion of candid photos, artwork and numerous colour images (that were not in the 2000 edition) make this a must-have for any fan of the most gentlemanly of genre stars.

JAMES BARNELL

## REVIVER

Beth Patrick  
St. Martin's Press

Who hasn't longed for one more last moment with a departed loved one? That's the paranormal spin in Beth Patrick's supernatural noir debut novel. With believable characters and a well-researched mythology, he immediately immerses the reader in his vivid world, where bodies of the recently dead can be resurrected and momentarily kept alive by people known as Revivers.

Jonah Miller is one of them: through touch, he can revive corpses long enough to allow them a final moment with their families or a chance to reveal valuable information about their deaths. It has been twelve years since reviving was discovered as a rare human ability, and Jonah is one of the best in his field, despite his occasionally fragile mental state. While reviving the victim of a horrific murder, he comes across a terrifying presence that he communicates with through the victim's body. Then, when Jonah gets assigned to a high-profile murder case, his fears about the mysterious presence only increase as it seems everything, dead and alive, is trying to stand in the way of him solving the mystery.

While the nifty-gaffty plot details and technical back story could become overwhelming, the momentous picks up right after the very creepy opening chapter and holds until the end. Patrick's knack for character development allows the reader to generate deep sympathy in a short amount of time, and not just for the victims, but for Jonah and the victims' families.

As the first novel in what will be the *Reviver* trilogy, the book has an introductory vibe, opening the gate to a supernatural world where freaky forensics and ghostly testimony can hold up in a court of law. With a twisting plot, a slew of intriguing characters and plenty of action, it works as a stand-alone story, but it'll be interesting to see how Patrick's fictional world — and his writing technique — develops with future volumes.

JESSA GARCIA



## LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED

HAUNTED

I'm a packer for haunted house stories and real-life hauntings have been on my mind a lot lately, between working on last month's ghost-themed issue, seeing *The Conjuring* in theatres and having recently read Brian Keene's *The Girl on the Glider*. The latter, a largely autobiographical novella-length ghost story, offers both an intimate look at the challenges and pitfalls of being a full-time writer and a compelling semi-sensationalized account of a possible haunting following a fatal accident at the end of his driveway. Truly fascinating stuff, which not only reminded me of the startling similarities between seemingly authentic hauntings (baroque's violent death, cold spots, things that only children and pets see, etc.), but also at the year I lost my own apartment — the year of the haunted apartment.

Ghost stories were scary before that, but they were much scarier afterwards. Over my twelve-month occupancy — during which time I underwent light therapy (I vacated from a well, cold spots no space heater could overcome and once awoke to the ceiling collapsing over where I slept in a perfect rectangle among other wonders — I came to vividly understand that when things cannot be explained by any ordinary, rational means, there only remains the extraordinary. Like Keene, I questioned my sanity, at least until the day the police called and reformed me in the previous fragment, a woman my age, had been raped and murdered in the bedroom and a psychiatrist needed to tour the unit. After that, I became a hothead — yet still someone in need — believe it or not — and moved out the day my lease expired. (I haven't experienced anything like it since.)

For me, truth's what gives ghost stories much of their power: the idea that hauntings could very well be real. Consider: if almost everyone knows someone who claims to have seen a ghost, and they don't just bubble up out of some luridly contingent, Keene elicits his through a slightly fictionalized series of diary entries, which are so concerned with the personal, mental journey that something like this takes a person on, as with the instances that the spectre seemingly greeted his ladder, set stationary toys in motion and did other seriously spooky shit.

If you're reading this thinking, "Monica, you've finally lost it," I don't blame you, but I do implore you to check out Keene's book and one other, Will Starb's *The Supernatural* (Harper, 2008). Starb is an award-winning British journalist who set out to prove or disprove hauntings, but as with *The Girl on the Glider*, the journey's the fascinating part here, as Starb applies a seasoned reporter's doggedness to the issue of the paranormal (and reaches some unexpected conclusions). If you're a skeptic, I guarantee that you'll come away from these books with a few new napping doubts. And if you're not, you'll probably be creeped out by them all the more. Unnerving reading!

JENNIFER KURTIN



NO MORE ORDS 50 51

# THE FRIGHT GALLERY

CURATED BY GARY PULLIN

## THIS MONTH: HIS NAME IS JASON, PART II

Last issue (AMP 30), Jason Edmiston gave us an exclusive step-by-step look at the process he used to create his new *Blackout* painting. The exploitation icon, played by William Marshall, is one of many bogymen, demons and cyborgs that will inhabit Edmiston's upcoming solo exhibit, *A Rogues Gallery*, which runs from August 23 to September 12 at Mondo Gallery in Austin, Texas.

While brainstorming to whom, or what, he wanted to pay tribute, Edmiston recognized it was high time someone created a classic, Hammer-inspired portrait of actor Marshall.

"I was deciding what monsters and villains to include in my show, and I wanted to include a few that were a little off the radar of most genre fans," he explains. "Blackout's films of the '70s were rife with zombies and mad scientists and other bad guys, but perhaps the most iconic of the genre characters from this time was *Blackout*, so I decided to take a crack at him."

Previously, Edmiston shared his pencil sketch, in which he expertly drafts a black and white linear of his subject, creating a tight rendering. Moving on, he traces his sketch onto a sheet of strong watercolour paper, prepared with gesso (a white primer), and begins a monochromatic subliminal underpainting to establish where the dark and light areas are. Then it's time to paint in colour, and the piece is halfway completed (pictured) below. Here, we can see things really start to take shape.

"I panned from background forward, so after the sky and lights are complete, and his clothes are blocked in, I wash a warm base colour over my underpainting of



his face," says Edmiston. "I've retone the shadows. After this stage, I will pump up the shadows even more, and work from the mid tones, to the lighter values with each subsequent colour."

Edmiston spends hours building up the colour and refining all the details. Once he's satisfied with the full range of values and contrast, he's finished. However, he must always be careful not to overdo this step.

"I often have multiple light sources, and very broad palettes. When I feel like the character jumps off the page, it's done."

Other satirical tricks and treats expected for the show include screen-printed posters for *Friday the 13th 3D*, a portrait of Tim Curry as *Deerhoof* in *Legend*, and a couple of Ray Harryhausen creatures. Without a doubt, the exhibit is the artist's most ambitious project to date.

Of course, after spending all of this time with monsters, it bears asking, which villain does he feel most at home with? True to his unpredictable nature, Edmiston confesses, "Cyclops. His complexion, build, I spend most of my time in a cove (shrub), and people poke at me with sticks, trying to get me to come out. Then I try to eat them."

Visit [jasonedmiston.com](http://jasonedmiston.com) to see more monster art.



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# THE GORE MET

MENU: MAGGOTVISION

**O**n the convention circuit, he's recognized by fans as "that guy from *Mordant*," or more aptly "Maggot," the character he played in an underground film made a decade ago that still ranks high on lists of the most disturbing movies ever made. Michael Todd Schneider is embarrassed by that, particularly when those same fans start handing him beers.

"You can be an artist your whole life and never to have done something that created some sort of ripple," he opines. "On the other hand, you do and you're forever haunted by it."

*Mordant*, alternately known as *August Underground's Mordant*, the second in a trilogy of brutal gore films shot as the video diaries of a group of serial killers, began as a long-form music video in 2000 by Pittsburgh-based underground studio Tasting Pictures for death metal band Necrophagia. Schneider envisioned a horror film hatching from their collaboration, Necrophagia frontman Kilgus concurred, but creative differences within the Tasting camp over Schneider's initial cut ultimately led to Schneider leaving the company. Consequently, there are two distinct versions of the film, each, the official Tasting sequel to *August Underground* (2001), and the more ram "maggot cut," simply titled *Mordant*. Original editions of both fetch upwards of \$200 on eBay.

After leaving Tasting, Schneider concentrated on other people's films, both as an actor and a special-effects artist. It wasn't until 2010 that he resurfaced as a filmmaker with *And Then / Hejped*, which premiered in the space back in *RAM:ON* before heading the world premiere at the Rue Morgue Festival of Fear that August.

Schneider came back, to coin a phrase, in grand style, as *And Then / Hejped* was just the first of four films he was preparing to unleash. And was the dual director, Halloween-themed anthology *Dark*, *Dark of Terror* (2013), originally shot in 2007, which closed with Schneider's 45-minute, surreal head bump *Our Devil's Night*. "This year, he released a true making-of-companion film to *...And Then / Hejped*, *Let's Make a Horror Movie* (discuss!)"



Michael Todd Schneider  
in *Our Devil's Night*

release a cameo appearance as *The Gore-met*, and a feature-length version of "Our Devil's Night." During shooting new footage for that, Death ripped Schneider on the shoulder.

"We were initially just expanding *Our Devil's Night* into its own feature and aiming for it to be a real gritty exploitation film. During that process I lost my good friend Ben Tobin," says Schneider of the man affectionately known as Mr. Ben within the maggot film universe. (Tobin was an actor rising horror fans will know by voice. In the '70s, he ran America Studios in Miami, providing English dub track for such Spanish gore favorites as 1972's *The Blood-Spattered Bride* and 1973's *Horror House* from the Rank.) "He was very much a taller figure to me and a big part of all of these films I made. That opened up all these doorways and I pushed myself to try to make a more important film. Being as such a dark place personally, it was very easy to tap that darkness and use it for a positive."

That positive is *Our Devil's Night* (2013), a disturbing assault-prone introduction to his rather antithetical character in the original version of "Our Devil's Night." In a brilliantly composed opening sequence, Schneider's unnamed mental case scales the front

gates of a hospital, and sprouts to freedom. After entering a famous psychotic episode in a river, he enters menacingly in the backyard of a rancher's suburban home before breaking in and watching their porn, guzzling their booze, and stealing a Jesus costume and a shotgun. He then wanders the streets, crashing Halloween parties, sexually abusing his old girlfriend, visiting his emotionally devastated and cancer-ridden father, and brutally raping a young woman who shows him compassion while he's in the depths of despair.

*Our Devil's Night* seamlessly careers from one act of utter sexual terrorism to another while Schneider grins and drags through an unrelentingly unsettling display of nihilism. It's the most transgressive film he's made since *Mordant*—in certain scenes it even surpasses that film—and it's sure to please underground horror fans looking for a handful of blood and cum. Still, this is depravity tempered with a naive born of necessity, and a doleful's worth of experience and wisdom.

"If a film wants to be, it will will itself without anyone being aware," muses Schneider. "I believe that Ben was a big factor in that, that he was pushing me without me knowing it. The crazy thing is, it was in the exact same time frame, ten years [ago], that we created *Mordant*, and with the exact same energy."

Schneider zealously retains all rights to his work and releases limited quantities, beautifully hand-crafted home video versions through his website, maggotfilms.com.



Our Devil's Night



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Early praise for *Burrowing the Middle Ground*: "though the storyline is engrossing with gore aplenty, it's really the characters, who are anything but cardboard, who will keep you wanting to turn the pages" — *Target Audience Magazine*

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# AUDIO-DROME

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REVIEWS BY DAVE KLEINER, TONY DRAGAN, MARK B. HOSAN, DOL  
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## DARK SKIES

Joseph Bishara  
 Warp Records

Joseph Bishara's ongoing association with the makers at the *Saw* franchise (*Headless*, TT-11-11) continues with this part-scenarist sound design effort that's a blend of unsettling drones, dissonant feedback and a recurring arcing frequency ("Missing Time") reminiscent of Louis and Bebe Barron's *Forbidden Planet* (1956). With the exception of overt sounds from cello, viola and bassoon in "Night Valt," the album features highly subdued sonic clouds that occasionally crest after low-frequency pulses or within breathy passages of warped wind chimes and distant strings ("Not in Contact"). Occasional stabs of dissonance break up the score's rather milder mood, but the breathy and elongated nature of the cues, not to mention a lack of a resolving finale makes this CD quite too incomplete.PLY Bishara didn't opt for an expanded album version, because this

couldn't've been a slow-cooking nightmare of the weird and the wonderful. **MRH 3.5/5**



## LAST EXORCISM 2

Michael Wandmacher  
 Scorpionwax Records

Not to be confused with the composer's other recent shocker, *Mounting in Connecticut 2*, this particular sequel features a wildly different array of thematic material and orchestral emulations reconfigured into abstract (sometimes wholly warped) versions. The main theme — a short, plaintive statement on strings with cycling piano figures — serves as the score's motor, with the recurring piano rhythm creating small bursts of energy in between atmospheric cues mimicking trickling imagery and shimmering reverberations, or echo-processed sounds that transpire from and recede to nothingness. Most cues run under two minutes, but a few lengthy cuts offer extended and dramatically full narratives. Wand-

macher's approach is to have a selective group of sounds drift and collide, and although the score lacks sustained moments of director and pulsing rhythms, *LEP* has a modest bite. **MRH 3.5/5**



## GONCRAFT

All for Naught

Fadedroom Records

*All for Naught* is as weird a concept as anything: a death metal record where all the standard elements, from guitars to drums and vocals, have been replaced by heavily reverberated piano. It's actually a fairly effective idea, by recontextualizing the genre with an instrument with so much potential for apocalyptic, *Goncraft* creates a soundtrack to the scariest horror movie suggested in track titles such as "Journey to the Depths" and "Heartbeat of the Abyss." The jangling layers of notes are unsettling to say the least, and even when the band dials it back, as in the farcical "Isolation Greens," the atmosphere is consistent dark and evil-sounding. The record is a little samey throughout, but overall it's quite effective, with dissonance and jarring switches in tempo simulating jump scares and horrific reveals, perfectly reinforcing the cinematic feel. At its best it plays as the score to a pre-fab horror flick, performed by a death-pianoist at Satan's own movie house. **AK 3.5/5**

wisdom to mine his artist's bedrock sound with great success. From the doom-drone opening strains of *13's* first track, "End of the Beginning" — over which Dzy Galsbome cryptically asks, "Is this the end of the beginning or the beginning of the end?" — he's got the original *Satan* (jazz drummer Bill Ward, sadly) back in that smelter world where heaven and hell are at war. Only "God Is Dead" appropriates the big hefts of something such as "Parasol" or "Iron Man," but as it charges through a place where "rivers of evil run through dying land" like a well-oiled steam engine, it's clear that Dolsbome's featured wall was made for Tony Iommi's apocalypse riffs. Still, most tracks over seven minutes, they're ended a Sabbath album for Sabbath fans. Forty-five years after forming, with Iommi at their side, Black Sabbath still owns the left-hand path. **DA 5.5/5**



## KEEP OUR HEADS

Various Artists  
 Eulaw Empire

A 99-minute "soundtrack to the Portland heavy underground," *Keep Our Heads* is a mix of metal, punk, Oi!, noise and experimental music compiled from 26 bands you've probably never heard of unless you've been to Portland. A mauling, cathechizing mix, the high points include Craig Daviler's "The Animal," which boasts shades of classic Motorhead, and a nice slice of noise from Redneck ("Princess") that starts off as moody as a nebulae and backs out what sounds like the world's biggest, loudest avalanche of rocks raining down on a demonic, screaming psychopath. A band named *Ace* wraps up the comp with an uptight synth track ("Heavy Day") fit for the credits of a film that climaxes with Earth's untimely explosion. The album claims to be influenced by the soundtracks to *Lost Highway* and *Repo Men*,

## DRESSED TO KILL

Pino Donaggio  
 Intrada Special Collection

Pino Donaggio's near-perfect fusion of genre conventions and three De Palma's Hitchcockian fixations still impresses with its elegant construction and surprisingly emphatic mood. The title theme — a classic giallo lullaby updated to a provocative red-dress sonata — is the emotional hub from which Donaggio spins off his rustic variations, with the epic and ethereal "The Museum" being the highlight. His heavy use of strings with delicate thematic ripples from woodwinds makes the cue exceptionally lush, and while the chord structure is very Hermetian-esque, Donaggio's style (lighty melodic, often shimmering from chamber arrangements) is still quite dominant, especially a pervasive tragic-romantic tone. The murder music is more overly Hermetian — fitting brass mimicking Psycho's slashing strings and bell chimes and funeral shroud figures recalling De Palma's *Sisters*. The entire disc is intricately beautifully mastered, nearly hour-long CD smooth on the score's decider narrative of elegant, if slightly agonized death. **MRH 5.5/5.5**



## BLACK SABBATH

13

REPUBLIC

From Johnny Cash to Jay-Z, the Beatles to Beyoncé — now — Black Sabbath, producer Rick Rubin has worked his beard

but it's hardly honor. Let's just say that if I'm ever driving to Portland, these 99 minutes won't be cracking the road-trip soundtrack. **D** **3.5**



## FEST

### The Crowing Horror

Aeon Records

Past takes might be caught off guard by The Crowing Horror. Unlike the band's previous material, which is full-blown, post-metal (yet fairly) black metal, the new album is more rhythmic, with a throwback sound closer to '80s proto-black metal and, at times, almost leading into prog-rock territory. But make no mistake, you'll be missing out on something special if you skip this release. Despite the band's move into different sonic landscapes, there's a lot of great stuff on *The Crowing Horror*. "Devil's Mark" is sexy, evil and groove-infused, like the perfect soundtrack to a satanic swingers night. "Thirteen Chimes" and "The Abomination of the God" are the proggiest tracks on the album, with a sound best described as Venom-meets-Rush — and yes, that is a very good thing. So don't get thrown off by the cymoman of the band's new retro sound: this is still evil-as-fuck Past making music in blaspheinous as ever. **B+** **3.5**



## NECRONOMICON

Rise of the Elder Ones

Season of Mist

Those who approach *Rise of the Elder Ones* expecting Necronomicon's usual storm and drag to open the some astral passageways as the primals its trankier celebrities will, alas, likely be disappointed. Repeated spins failed, at least for this reviewer, to summon 'Tog-Schloth — though the sick, roaring baritone breakdown on "The Living God" and emphatic keyboard flourishes speckling the pen-

meter "Resurrected" appeared to come very close. So sad. Still, the mean-spirited, metallic death metal the Montreal le des sunnon forth will undoubtedly swell the black hearts of those extreme music aficionados interested in wearing Marbled Angels' *Atone of Madness* by way of Behemoth's *The Apostasy*. Perhaps this little-offer is for the best — after all, according to Llewellyn, Abdul Alhazred, the Necronomicon's supposed author, was "torured by an insatiable monster in broad daylight and devoured horribly before a large number of fright-frozen witnesses." One presumes he might have preferred a mesh pit. **SM** **3.5**



## GULAG

Verukata

Crucial Blast

Crucial Blast's release of *Verukata* from the Gulag series (nominally not known as Gulag) focuses heavily upon unleashing a feeling of horror and unease within the listener. It recalls the serial series with a distinct collage of slashing violin strikes, incoherent procession and a cacophonous symphony of voices, all of which combine to create some truly harrowing ear-music. Gulag — as they did under their previous moniker at Stalag — claims the usage of real, recorded screams and cries of mental hospital patients, including children, during the production of *Verukata*, though whether or not this is true is another matter. What is certain is that *Verukata* shocks, disturbs and morally drains you on almost every level. Believe it, this album is not for the weak of heart, nor for those whose idea of a good time doesn't involve the endurance of frenzied screams of fear and pain, cracked throughout an industrialized palette of concrete and melody. It all makes for truly uneasy listening. **BP** **3.5**



Last issue we talked about John Carpenter and Goblin as some of the biggest horror soundtrack composers. The biggest name in soundtracks for horror movies that don't exist, however, is Ohio's Midnight Syndicate.

Edward Douglas is the main composer and creative force behind over a dozen Midnight Syndicate albums, each one based around a particular spooky story or theme. For example, *Boys of the Night* (1990) is a musical journey through a haunted castle, *Class of Deference* (2001) is set in a haunted insane asylum and *Carnival Arcane* (2011) was inspired by old-time carnivals and Ray Bradbury's *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. Though the music, a blend of instrumental and sound effects, has found a fanbase amongst goth and ambient music lovers, Midnight Syndicate essentially functions as mood music for horror fans, and has been featured prominently in haunted attractions, including Universal's massively popular Halloween Horror Nights.

On the group's latest album, *Monsters of Legend*, Douglas has gone back to horror score basics, creating an album influenced by classic Universal, Hammer, Amicus and Euro Horror from the '60s and '70s.

"Classic horror is at the core of everything we do, it's who we are," Douglas asserts. "I think that our 'soundtrack-to-imaginary-film' concept goes along with what made those classic horror films so great. They're heavy on atmosphere and often leave details up to the imagination, our goal on the disc was to make you feel like you are a character in one of those great classics."

Extremely cinematic in scope and feel, *Monsters of Legend* is an album tailored for grown-up monster kids. It will appeal to horror fans of every shade, and soundtrack geeks will notice specific influences popping up.

"James Bernard and the Hammer Films' scores have always been a huge influence for us so you will definitely hear that when listening to the disc," says Douglas. "I also think you might catch a bit of Bernard Herrmann, Max Steiner [King Kong] and a touch of Hans Zimmer [The Wolf Man], too. It's the imagery, stories and characters from all those films that inspire us."

Midnight Syndicate has worked in other subgenres, as well, combining pop and rock with spooky ambient — recently providing music for an album by singer/songwriter



Debbie Beard. The two-man outfit (Dave Goska is the other core member) also recently scored the Paul Bunyan-themed modern horror film *Joe Grant*. In addition, Douglas will be a guest at this month's Festival of Fear in Toronto, where he'll be featured on a panel discussing his various adventures in soundtrack horror, as well as *Monsters of Legend*, which is a prime example of where his love for the genre lies.

"One of our primary focuses is that when you put this disc on you will be transported into the world of classic horror films. Once there, we want to keep you there until that last note fades out. No escape."

JASON VON LIPTON

FOR HIS MOST EPIC HORROR SCORE YET, COMPOSER MARCO BELTRAMI FOUND INSPIRATION IN THE SIMPLE TONE OF A TUNING FORK

# APOCALYPSE Z

MARK R. HASAN

**T**HE RECENT ARRIVAL OF *WORLD WAR Z* NOT ONLY GIVES ZOMBIE FANS ANOTHER PORK AT THE UNSTOPPABLE SUBGENRE, BUT IT REUNITES THEM WITH THE MUSIC OF COMPOSER MARCO BELTRAMI.

His previous cinematic work includes the industrial-strength electronic score for *Resident Evil*—created with Marilyn Manson—and the scaled-down flesh-muncher music for *Warm Bodies*, with co-composer Buck Sanders, but this composition presents yet another angle on the undead subgenre.

"When I first saw the movie," explains Beltrami, who was brought on back in late 2011, when the film was still slated for a winter 2012 release, "the thing that struck me about it is that the opening takes place in Philadelphia and these zombies take over and it cuts to this Emergency Broadcast System beacon, and so it seemed like a good place to start out, in terms of where to begin musically."

So, aided by long-time right-hand man and electronics whiz Sanders, he built somewhat of an experimental score based around tuning forks, designed to represent the chaos and emergency of a zombie apocalypse rapidly engulfing the entire planet.

"We took some tuning forks that have a real pure tone and processed them," says Beltrami. "That became the base for most of the harmonic and melodic language of the movie."

However, at one point during the scoring process, he was required to reassess his original designs.

"The studio had a big-budget movie on its hands and felt that the music needed to be epic as well, so that became the next challenge—how to integrate the big, epic scope while still retaining a little bit of the quirky character of the experimental stuff."

Using separate chamber and full orchestras, Beltrami ended up replacing large chunks of the original electronic elements, but the end result, as showcased on the Warner Bros. soundtrack album, reveals a large-scale orchestral work that is neither overwhelming and bombastic, nor wholly disconnected from Beltrami's original harmonic and melodic structure. The melodic material within the reflective track "The Last Family," for example, emerges from a handful of softly rendered tones, and the harmonic structure—expanded here and there with mixed chorus—has a gentle, primal purity that

ties directly to the essence of unblemished humanity. As a contrast, the churning string figures in "Philadelphia" emphasize tones reminiscent of a warning siren. But it's been melted, reheated and re-fabricated with the organic whir of massing insects.

"This particular film is very different than *Warm Bodies* or any other zombie movies that I've seen before in that the zombies themselves act almost as if they're a force of nature," explains Beltrami. "It's almost like they move as a swarm of bees or ants. . . Musically, it all suggested orchestrations that had to mimic that stuff."

As the scope of the danger builds within "Philadelphia," Beltrami thickens the saturation of sounds, culminating in brass chords that distort like splattering liquid. Since his auspicious slasher debut with *Scream* (1998), he's been widely recognized by filmmakers, fans and fellow composers

for his sophisticated orchestral writing, which can traverse into abstract or elegantly melodic styles. But he's also skilled in writing striking polyrhythmic music and using odd metres (i.e., Robert is especially rich in rhythmic details), much like Jerry Goldsmith, under whom Beltrami studied when he came to California in 1993. Either thematically or within his action cues, Beltrami has frequently followed Goldsmith's approach, especially in *The Omen* (2006) remake, which is a riveting homage to both the original film and the classic tradition of anchoring a score around a central, easy-to-grasp main theme.

Each of Beltrami's zombie scores are similarly built around simple themes, and it's their distinct styles—instrumentally, thematically, and via the variety of sonic experimentation—which have made him an important voice to horror fans wanting music with narrative clarity, sophistication and thrilling dynamism.

"I had come from a world that valued complex ideas—and sometimes even hiding behind complexity—and [Jerry Goldsmith's] thing was to be as economical as possible in writing, both in terms of making things playable for the orchestra and also in terms of the film as a whole, playing with a simple idea, and letting that be the root system that can branch out and provide the framework for the score of the movie." ♡



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**NOW PLAYING> THE LAST OF US, STATE OF DECAY**



## THE LAST OF US

PS3

Naughty Dog Studio

Survival horror games have been hit-and-miss lately, with major franchises such as *Silent Hill* and *Resident Evil* turning out sequels with diminishing returns. With Telltale's *The Walking Dead* from last year, we witnessed the first inklings of an uprising, and now Naughty Dog (creators of *Uncharted*) takes things to the next level with the PS3 exclusive *The Last of Us*.

With roots to 20 Days Later and *The Road*, *The Last of Us* takes place in a dystopian United States, nearly years after an airborne fungal outbreak turns its victims into vicious flesh-eating mutants. Joel, a man haunted by the loss of his daughter, is entrusted with the care of Ellie, a young girl who may be the key to a cure. A cross-country trek across a ravaged and hostile America to a hidden lab begins, with Joel and Ellie encountering bandits, combat, the military and hordes of zombie-like infected. Much like the *Uncharted* series, Naughty Dog combines a fluid control system, beautiful graphics and great storytelling to create a game with white-knuckle tension, plus moments of real tragedy and hope.

The controls themselves are also similar to those of *Uncharted*, making stealth and duck-and-cover gameplay equally important as



knowing when to flee. Ammo and supplies are scant (as they would be in the real world), so choosing between fight or flight is crucial to surviving. Hints no mistake — this is no action-blasting brawler. The gameplay is often slow, methodical and very intense, punctuated with moments of vicious gurgling and howling, making it top-notch horror with an emphasis on survival.

Of course, horror only works if you care

about the characters, and *The Last of Us* delivers. The writing and voice acting are of the highest caliber, with special acknowledgment to Troy Baker and Ashley Johnson (Joel and Ellie, respectively). The story is clear, twisty and also surprisingly realistic for a AAA release, and the natural and believable evolution of Joel and Ellie's relationship gives it its heart.

*The Last of Us* is as close to survival horror perfection as you're going to get, and it's certainly a contender for game of the year in this or any genre.

**ROM MCKENZIE**



## STATE OF DECAY

Xbox Live

Undead Labs

Another month, another zombie title.

*State of Decay*, however, goes above the gut pile with some great storytelling and fast-paced action. Through the course of this sandbox game, you play multiple survivors who are all trying get to the bottom of the z-log apocalypse without becoming dinner themselves. The intuitive controls for fighting and scavenging weapons and supplies quickly immerse you in the game's world, but don't for a second think this is a simplistic title; it actually combines several forms of gameplay from straight-on beat-'em-ups, to the more strategy-based securing of safe zones, to using stealth to slip by the hungry hordes, to the construction of helpful buildings at your home base.

When the survivor you are currently controlling becomes tired or wounded, you can switch to another, over time developing the various playable characters' unique skills and defenses. This element brings considerable depth to the story and adds another level of strategy to the mix if you want to hone your shooting skills, then

you have to shoot more zombies, but to do that you must put that person in danger. As a result, *State of Decay* makes you care about the characters a helluva lot. (When my leader had his head ripped off by a mutant zombie, I felt as deflated as my group of survivors did.)

The scores primarily come from the overwhelming amount of undead and how quickly you can be overrun by them while doing something routine like seeking supplies. Nighttime explorations are doubly suspenseful since your vision is limited to what you can see with your small flashlight or vehicle headlights. While the game truly excels, however, is with its evocative world. Every choice you make has consequences. Don't have time to help someone? Well, it might change the story. Depending on the survivors you choose to play, the storylines vary, allowing for different outcomes to random in-game events.



*State of Decay* combines the best elements of action, story and zombie killin', putting it in that class of must-own zombie games. I'd write more, but I can't stop playing.

**BRENTON BENTZ**

**REMARKS:** *THE LAST OF US* HAS A MASSIVE, COHESIVE AND INSPIRING STORY. PLenty of FUN. *WORLD OF WARCRAFT* FORWARD DAY ONE. AFTERNOON ONLY DISAPPOINTING ENDING.





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# CLASSIC CUT

## TUBULAR BELLS

MIKE OLDFIELD  UK • 1979

For decades, the music of horror cinema was largely dominated by one sound. Whether it was Franz Waxman's work on *Jane Eyre*, Frankenstein, James Bernard's Hammer scores or even the TV soundtracks of Bob Cobert (*Dark Shadows*, *The Night Stalker*) horror was typically scored with orchestral bombast. That would change following the release of William Friedkin's *The Exorcist* and the use of Mike Oldfield's iconic "Tubular Bells, Part One."

In many ways, *The Exorcist* was more raw and powerful than any horror film preceding it. Friedkin granted the music to reflect the film, which was breaking new ground with its balance of realism and supernatural scares. The film's score needed to be just as fresh and unpredictable.

Friedkin got exactly that from Lalo Schifino, whose eclectic composition was a mixture of percussion, wild strings and a capella notes from a child soloist. However, Schifino's music also had an overt intensity that ultimately led to his composer's demise. Speaking to the *Los Angeles Times* in '78, Friedkin was blunt about firing Schifino: "This movie needs very little music. It should be subtle and small. Not to scare the audience, that was the point. Lalo and I differed on it. It needs restraint."

Instead of trying his luck with another composer, Friedkin sidled the catapulse of orchestral compositions, relying largely on the work of Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki. Eventually, the director discovered the progressive music of the *Tubular Bells* LP.

Though he only utilized the first few minutes of the epic twenty-five-and-a-half-minute composition from the album's first side and never intended it to be frightening, that excerpt became a sonic calling card for fear and dread. For Oldfield, the music's raw power was an unintentional side effect of his own mental state.

"I was pretty paranoid at the time," Oldfield recalled in a 2011 interview with *The Guardian*. "I was only nineteen and I had a lot of psychological problems and phobias."

The mesmerizing simplicity of Oldfield's multi-layered composition influenced horror soundtracks for nearly two decades following *The Exorcist*'s release. Genre

time became dominated by hypnotically repetitive music, usually driven by a basic piano or synthesizer melody.

"I still hear it every day," Oldfield said in the same 2011 interview. "Anytime there's something a little bit spooky—you hear that kind of piano, they just change the notes around a little bit."

Oldfield's dismissive take on the sound he pioneered belies the effectiveness of the scores he influenced. *Tubular Bells* proved that prog music could create the atmosphere of a horror film effortlessly. Dario Argento realized this while completing *Profondo Rosso* in 1975. In echos of the clash between Friedkin and Schifino, Argento was dissatisfied with the work of jazz composer Giorgio Gaslini. In a recent interview, Gaslini cited Argento's desire to recreate *Tubular Bells* as the reason he headed *Rosso*'s scoring duties to Italian prog-rock group Goblin.

Goblin's contributions to *Rosso* and other horror films took the template that Oldfield had modestly created and expanded upon it. *Rosso*'s haunting, minimalist music paved the way for Goblin's score for *Suspense*, whose *Bells*-like themes were covered in layers of tribal drumming, whispering and wailing guitar break-outs.

Elsewhere in Italian horror, Fabio Frizzi would craft a creepy main theme for Lucio Fulci's under-rated 1977 thriller *Seven Black Nuts* (a.k.a. *The Psycho*). Fulci would again turn to the layered Oldfield approach with Walter Ruzza's *Nauro* by the Cemetery soundtrack and with Ruzza's increasingly complex pieces for *Manhattan Baby* and *The Beyond*.

While Goblin expanded the sound of *Tubular Bells*, John Carpenter emphasized menace by stripping it bare. The chilling combination of piano, synthesizer and a clock-like ticking feature heavily in his scores for *Halloween* and *The Thing*. This style came to the forefront in his score for *Assault on Precinct 13* and dominated all of his later music, particularly during his years of collaborating with Alan Howarth. Carpenter, an admirer of the music in *Suspense* and *The Exorcist*, kept the style alive with his deceptively simple arrangements. His work would go on to influence the soundtracks of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Creature 2*, *Child's Play* and countless others, but Carpenter learned it from Oldfield.

Current mainstream cinema shockers may have returned to full orchestras, but *Tubular Bells* will be remembered as the piece that opened the door for horror cinema's switch from overpowering strings to something smaller, more restless and hypnotic.

ADAM CLARKE



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